

Saddle up for summer

Pages 20-21



Chamber music seeks listeners

Pages 12-13

Rolls-Royce clone?



Native carmaker Geely revealed its latest concept car at Auto Shanghai 2009: the Geely Excellence. It stunned viewers with its uncanny resemblance to the Rolls-Royce – even down to a silver angel statue above its grill.

While Geely said the Excellence will not be mass-produced before 2011, the clone fueled a new round of criticism of how Chinese carmakers are developing. Some say Japanese and Korean auto giants also got their start in pillaging intellectual property, but the Excellence goes too far. Read more about Auto Shanghai 2009 on Page 6.

(By Wang Yu)
IC Photo

End in sight
for one-child
generations?

Page 3

Text says to beat
vendors with
great kung fu

Page 7

Courtyard
costs immune
to economy

Page 11

'Hermit crab'
swaps homes
for a year

Page 15



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Annual income only buys 4 square meters

By Zhang Dongya

The average price of commercial housing in China hit 4,000 yuan per square meter last year, according to a report by the Ministry of Land and Resources and its subordinate institution China Land Surveying and Planning.

When compared with the urban per capita disposable income of 15,781 yuan, this means urban dwellers can only afford to buy four square meters of house space assuming they do not spend

even a fen elsewhere.

The report, which analyzed the major cities' land prices, found the average price of commercial housing grew by 1,700 yuan from its 2001 low of 2,170 yuan per square meter. The price jumped most rapidly after 2003.

The findings inspired a new round of complaints about the country's exaggerated housing prices.

"Generally speaking, the housing price in foreign countries is

higher than in the domestic market. But, since the per capita income of countries like Japan and the US is much higher, they can afford a home with relative ease," industry critic Zhu Sabei said.

With the economic crisis, housing prices fell in most cities. But Deputy Chief Engineer Zou Xiaoyun of the surveying institute said land prices lagged behind housing prices, and the prices in major cities have not gone down.

Interpretations of the published

data were divided.

Since the housing price is a sensitive topic, departments seldom release specific data and only report changes in the rate. Information on housing prices is confusing, which makes it hard to trust.

To deal with the market chaos, the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development said it will set up a regular public announcement system for real estate market information to keep the public informed.

New guidelines tell parents to separate children from cyberland

By Han Manman

Two new guidelines advise parents on how to steer children clear of one of the country's fastest-growing social problems: Internet addiction.

Titled "Guidelines on Preventing Network Addiction at Home" and "Basic Principles for a Harmonious Family," these reports were based on interviews, observations and studies of 800 Internet addicts by experts from the Chinese Teenager Mental Growth Base of the General Hospital of Beijing Military Area Command of Chinese PLA.

The guides put forward concrete measures to prevent or combat Internet addiction at home.

Tao Ran, director of the mental growth base, said Internet addiction – a term he defines as anyone who spends more than six hours per day online for purposes other than work or study – reflects the family, education and character of the user. Tao points to family factor as the weakest of these links, but says proper guidance can help children develop better.

Guidelines advise parents to seek the reason behind their child's Internet addiction, citing introversion, poor study habits and conflicts with classmates as reasons children turn to the virtual world.

Parents should talk with their children at least one hour a day and help them try new hobbies like sports and music. It also advises that parents place family computers in the living room, where they can monitor use, instead of in a child's bedroom.

Tao said Internet addiction occurs most often in children between the ages of 12 and 22, and that 95 percent of Internet addicts are boys. These guidelines are meant to provide parents with a framework to help their children.

Government statistics released last week say the country has the largest netizen population with 316 million users and counting, 70 percent of whom are under the age of 30.

A recent survey of Internet use by global market information group TNS found that 44 percent of Chinese people spend their leisure time online: the highest rate of all 16 countries surveyed.

New orphanage welcomes first children



Beijing SOS Children's Village, the first of its kind in Beijing, opens in July. Located in Daxing district, the village is the 10th SOS in China, co-sponsored by the Beijing government and SOS Kinderdorf International. It will house up to 120 orphans, ages 4 to 12, selected by local civil affairs bureaus throughout the country.

CFP Photo

Bidding opens for a solution to city's trash

By Zhao Hongyi

The city is inviting engineers from around the world to fight odors looming over its three largest landfills as the hot summer months approach. The three particularly smelly landfills are part of its eight-landfill disposal network.

The dumps are in Asuwei, Beishenshu and Anding villages. Bidding begins May 6 and is open to movable gas collecting stations and movable gas burning systems, said Liang Tianhao, director of garbage disposal at Beijing Environment Sanitation Engineering Group (BESEG), the event's host.

"It's necessary to improve the gas wells to prevent marsh gas from spreading into the air. We

also have to upgrade the facilities at landfill sites," Liang said. "We welcome bidders worldwide who have a better solution."

The group will purchase seven odor-fighting vehicles for the landfill. The preferred method is to use high-pressure fog-spreading vehicles, which can consolidate the smell by creating a layer of fog over the dump. The fog can cool high temperatures and prevent the smell from spreading.

The project also includes a smell-disposing system for the Nangong Garbage Composting Mill, one of the city's two composts.

Experts from the municipal commission of city operations and management said the project is only for emergency use. It

cannot solve the sites' problems.

"We need to step up our waste sorting to reduce the amount of garbage buried and increase the amount of organic composting," Yang Qin, an engineer from the commission, said.

Yang said 94.1 percent of the garbage in Beijing is disposed of by burial, 3.9 percent is composted and 2 percent is burned as fuel.

Besides the eight landfills under the municipal commission, Beijing has another eight managed at the district level. Total garbage disposal capability is estimated at 10,300 tons each day: the city produces 18,400 tons per day, Chen Yonggong, director general of the commission, said.



Xiaowuji Garbage Transfer Station in Chaoyang district, one of hundreds of transfer stations, ensures a clean environment for nearby residents.

Photo provided by BESEG

It is not all trash news. The city has improved its disposal habits by constructing two composting mills and the Gao'antun burning site in

preparation for the Beijing Olympic Games last year. But it is struggling to boost its capacity and to update its aging technologies.

Experts say now is the time to change one child policy

By Han Manman

While many countries are battling the lowest fertility rates ever recorded, China remains unique in clinging to its one child policy of 30 years. But recent research and new findings have some experts declaring that forced family planning is the root of the country's social ills. Debate continues among scholars and leaders as to whether a second child should be allowed, and whether it is time for change.

Li Qin (pseudonym), a 29-year-old Beijinger, had a happy life with her husband after they married in 2006. That all changed when she became pregnant in early 2007.

"One day, my mother-in-law asked me to go to the hospital and check the sex of the fetus. She said she already arranged for one of her contacts there to do it for me," Li said.

Five months pregnant and not thinking about why her mother-in-law asked her to do that, Li agreed.

The results showed Li's baby would likely be a girl. Her husband and mother-in-law immediately demanded she abort the pregnancy.

Li said her husband was born in a small village, and that in his mind a boy is much more important than a girl. Finally, she agreed and had an abortion.

But Li found she was pregnant again early this year. Her mother-in-law once again asked her to check the sex of the fetus.

"What will I do if it is a girl again? I don't want another abortion, but who can make sure it's a boy?" Li said.

"The country faces a shocking male to female imbalance because the one child policy has led parents to seek sex selective abortions, according to new research published early this month."

Selective abortions responsible for imbalance

The government imposes a one child restriction on parents to control the country's population, but a cultural preference for sons and cheap access to ultrasound scans has led to many terminating pregnancies if they are expecting a daughter, despite sex-selective feticide being illegal, according to a study published early this month.

Professors Wei Xingzhu and Li Lu at Zhejiang University and Therese Hesketh from University College London based their study on census data from 2005, which tested one percent of the nation's population. Their findings say China has a surplus of 32 million men under the age of 20, with the ratio for one to four-year-olds at 126 male births for every 100 female deliveries.

A normal ratio is 105 male births for every 100 females.

Only the Tibet and Xinjiang autonomous regions, the most lenient in enforcing the one child policy, had normal sex ratios.

"China will see very high and steadily worsening sex ratios in the



Many experts suggest China adjust its population policy from population control to population optimization, and from seeking negative growth to seeking balanced growth.

IC Photos

reproductive age group over the next two decades," the paper said.

With couples in most provinces limited to one child, a market for boys has developed. Guangdong media said over 1,000 boys were abducted since 2007 in Dongguan alone. The street price of a stolen boy has ballooned to six months of an average worker's wages.

To tackle further gender imbalances, researchers suggested enforcing the existing ban on sex selective abortion. They also suggested the government permit couples to have a second child following the birth of a daughter.

Best time for a change?

The family planning policy has been a state policy for 30 years, so abolition or major adjustment is extremely unlikely. But experts said small adjustments in certain regions or alterations to the policy are necessary and easy to implement.

Now is the best time for such an adjustment, they said.

"We are facing a historical choice with our population policies, as the main issue has become social structure, not numbers.

"I believed there was no alternative to the one child policy, but that never made it an ideal."

Circumstances have changed,

and most couples do not want many children. They will hold down the population on their own, so we in turn must adjust the policy to alleviate its negative effects," Ji Baocheng, president of Renmin University, said in an interview with *Southern Weekend* last week. His school is known for its population studies center.

"The long-term and rapid fall in China's birth rate has, directly or indirectly, caused a chronic imbalance in gender ratio, an aging population, increased difficulty in maintaining national security and defense and greater risks for one child families."

The National Bureau of Statistics said more than 8 percent of the population is 65 years old or older. If the one child policy continues, each couple will have to feed four elderly parents in addition to their child.

This is a crushing burden for families not employed within the state system.

The fertility rate has remained low and stable, so the country should adjust its population policy from population control to population optimization, and from seeking negative growth to seeking balanced growth, Ji said. A bal-

ance must be found between the interests of the nation and those of the family, he said.

A growing number of experts, critics and the public favor changing the policy to allow couples to have a second child. In a recent online poll by QQ's news portal, 76 percent of 66,000 respondents said they wanted two children; 15 percent preferred one child; 4 percent wanted no children; 5 percent wanted three or more.

Sun Changmin, deputy head of the Shanghai population and family planning commission and a policy change advocate, said Monday that the country has already done enough for the government to relax its regulations.

"If a family had two children on average, it would solve the future aging problems without introducing a new baby boom," Sun said, adding that the high cost of raising a child and planned parenthood programs have led many in the 80s generation to shy away from the idea of having a second child.

He said small changes to the policy should be allowed in cities that have seen a sharp decline in population and which maintain a low birth rate: cities like Beijing and Shanghai.

Still too soon to relax

While experts appealed to the government to change the current policy, some insist the one child policy should not be lifted. On



China faces a severe gender imbalance problem.

the contrary, it should be enforced even more strictly.

"The current family-planning policy must be tightened, and a stricter one child policy should be implemented," said Cheng Enfu, an economist and president of the Marxism Research Institute at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

Quickly controlling and reducing the population will improve citizens' lives and close the gap between China and the West in terms of per-capita GDP and living standards, Cheng said. He said scientific and rational population control policies will create economic and health benefits and promote "harmonious development."

Cheng was strongly opposed to allowing a couple to have two children. The average Chinese family spends tens of thousands of yuan on each child from pregnancy to age 16, he said. The cost of raising children will increase, and more children will consume more resources, placing a heavier economic burden on families and society, he said.

Government unlikely to bend

The government has owned up to the effects of sex imbalance and rapid aging. To combat feticide, it started educational campaigns to promote gender equality and allowed parents with no brothers and sisters to have a second child. These measures have had some success, and show that change is occurring.

However, that change does not reflect a change in policy. Early this week, the National Population and Family Planning Commission of China responded to the experts' claims and said China's family planning policy will not change, and there is no chance it will be adjusted further.

Despite a growing chorus of citizens calling for change, the government is staunchly determined to keep growth in check, lest it undermine the country's economic achievements of the last 30 years. Still, a slight policy change could create the balance the government is striving to maintain.

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Two women from Qingdao pose for picture with a visiting sailor. This week's naval parade involved fleets from 14 countries.

Xinhua Photo



Parade shows naval power

As the country prepares to mark the 60th anniversary of the founding of its People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy on Thursday, the normally secretive military has taken the unprecedented step of showcasing some of its best vessels and naval weaponry.

At dawn on Tuesday, a long row of grey-hulled warships sailed past the port city of Qingdao, in Shandong Province, making an unprecedented display of the country's growing naval might and a statement about its new willingness to use it around the world.

The four-day celebration – involving 21 naval vessels from 14 countries – included a fleet parade and a sampan race.

Officials from 29 nations are also due to attend, including the US chief of naval operations, and the Russian navy commander-in-chief, Xinhua News Agency reported.

The fleet review marked the 60th anniversary of the founding of the PLA Navy,

which was established in 1949.

But the display of force, which is to include the first public showing of China's nuclear submarine fleet, also serves notice that the country has arrived as a global naval power. It is a moment of obvious pride for the nation, and one of quiet concern for some of its neighbors.

Much of the chatter around the fleet review has been about China's recently stated intention to build an aircraft carrier, which would make it the eighth country to do so. Media reports suggest that it is developing two aircraft carriers that could be ready for launch by 2015.

(Agencies)

On scene

Amid the clicks of digital cameras, one could almost imagine there were no such things as territorial disputes.

Chinese sailors – and there were many from the quarter-million strong naval force – could be found everywhere, eagerly taking photos in front of the visiting ships.

We stopped to chat with a group of Chinese navy officers photographing one another next to the Russian navy's 11,370-ton Vayag missile cruiser.

"Which foreign ship have you liked the most?"

"The Korean one has nice lines!" one Chinese officer said. "It's very advanced," another said.

In fact, South Korea's 18,000-ton Dokdo – a landing helicopter platform assault ship – outsized all the other vessels at the fleet review.

And it attracted huge crowds of Chinese civilians. "Slowly, slowly!" A Korean sailor shouted into his megaphone, trying to calm the packs of Chinese families scrambling onto the gangplank to explore the ship.

But it was not long before politics came into play – even in jest.

A US sailor bounded over, impishly, "Have you been to the Russian ship? We heard they needed to get towed in."

Another time, I approached a couple of Pakistani sailors, "Have you been to the Indian ship?"

"Pakistan," they answered, pointing at themselves.

"Yes, I know. You're from Pakistan," I replied. "But have you visited the Indian ship?"

"No, Pakistan," they chorused again. (Adrienne Mong, NBC News Producer)

Official

Navy to play bigger role on world stage

China will build on its naval strength to safeguard national interests, as well as protect its sovereignty and territorial integrity, defense minister Liang Guanglie said. The celebrations in Qingdao will also show the nation as a force for "peace, harmony and cooperation" at sea.

The latest moves in Chinese naval diplomacy are part of its determination to play a bigger role on the world stage.

"China has a vast sea area, protecting its sovereignty and territorial integrity is the duty of the PLA. The navy will further increase its capabilities to respond to the country's overall interest," Liang said.

Echoing Liang, naval commander Wu Shengli said in a recent interview that the navy is undergoing a transformation to protect the country and its maritime rights.

But Wu stressed that a harmonious ocean needs the concerted efforts by all navies. The UN must play a key role in maintaining the order of the sea, he said.

As a special envoy, the Chinese navy has already visited over 30 countries in 5 continents. Its escort missions in far-away Somalia, to guard against pirates, are only a small step in the march to becoming a fully functional world power.

Over the past years, Chinese naval forces have carried out several joint exercises with counterparts that include those from the US, Russia, the UK and Pakistan. The joint efforts at sea reveal that the country is becoming increasingly confident to play a bigger role on the world stage. (By Huang Daohen)

Great Wall is longer than thought

(AP) – The Great Wall is even greater than once thought.

A two-year government mapping study has uncovered new sections of the ancient monument that total about 290 kilometers, according to a report posted on the State Bureau of Surveying and Mapping Web site.

Using mapping technologies such as infrared range finders and GPS devices, experts discovered portions of the wall – concealed by hills, trenches and rivers – that stretch from Hu Mountain in Liaoning Province to Jiayu Pass in Gansu Province, *China Daily* reported Monday.

The newly mapped parts of the wall were built during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) to protect the country against northern invaders and were submerged over time by sandstorms that moved across the arid region, the study said.

The additional parts mean the Great Wall – which emperors began constructing 2,000 years ago to keep out Mongols and invaders – spans about 6,300 kilometers through the northern part of the country.

The joint project, conducted by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage and the State Bureau of Surveying and Mapping, will continue for another year in order to map sections of the wall built during the Qin (221-206 BC) and Han (206 BC-9 AD) dynasties, the report said.

Recent studies by Chinese archaeologists have shown that sections of the wall in Gansu Province are being reduced to "mounds of dirt" by sandstorms and may disappear entirely in 20 years. They blamed destructive farming methods in the 1950s that desertified large areas of north. In addition, portions of the wall in Gansu were made of packed earth, which proved less resilient than brick and stone used in much of the wall's construction.

China in recent years has begun restoring parts of the wall as well as trying to rein in commercial development on and around it.

The wall's modern sections around Beijing date from the Ming Dynasty, including those restored since the Communist Party took power in 1949. Several areas – including the most popular Badaling – draw hundreds of thousands of visitors each year.

Tourist encroachment also has been a problem in recent years, with state media saying that near Badaling, almost every brick on a popular section of the wall has been carved with people's names or other graffiti.

Global carmakers woo Shanghai auto expo



Once a mere sideshow, the Shanghai auto show is now a prime destination for the global car industry. And it is no wonder: in a grim landscape, the Chinese market is a rare bright spot.

The Shanghai auto show, which opened to the press Monday and runs through this week, looks to be a playground for some ambitious players: Japanese and South Korean automakers that have grabbed US market share from the struggling Detroit Big Three, European luxury carmakers that anticipate their fastest growth in China and Chinese automakers that are eager to build global brands.

The event has registered 1,500 foreign and domestic automakers, the organizers said. Global carmakers said they are optimistic that gains in China will help offset the downturn they are facing in other parts of the world.

Domestic carmakers including Geely and BYD announced earlier that they would unveil new-energy vehicles at the show. **(Agencies)**

Auto Shanghai 2009 is attracting global automakers in the economic downturn.

IC Photo

Analysis: Noah's Ark for global auto market

By Huang Daohen

China is the only major auto market still growing amidst the global economic downturn, and has become a Noah's Ark for global automakers, Wen Yijun, an industrial analyst with Oriental Securities, said.

"Those who can board the ark will be more likely to survive the crisis."

According to the National Bureau of Statistics, Chinese vehicle sales hit a monthly record of 1.11 million in March, exceeding US sales.

Wen said the market growth in China this year was a result of the government's economic stimulus efforts and special incentives for the industry.

Since last November, the government has poured money into expanding the country's

network of highways and roads. "That spending could sustain auto sales growth for years to come," he said.

"Chinese consumers are gaining more confidence, and the robust sales performance may extend to the rest of the year."

All of these are prompting automakers to think of China not as an emerging market but, increasingly, as the industry's central battleground, Wen said.

One sign is that while a number of companies shunned auto shows in North America and Europe, auto companies are doing their best at the Shanghai Auto Show. Nissan Motor, for example, skipped this year's Detroit show and plans to be absent from Frankfurt's, but is making a splash in Shanghai.

Among other signs, Ford has

decided to move its Asia-Pacific headquarters to China from Thailand later this year.

However, Wen noted that increased car sales do not necessarily mean China has become the main market for the auto industry.

Compared to their rivals, Chinese carmakers still remain largely uncompetitive because of their limited technology and manufacturing capabilities, he said. Besides, the country also suffers from a reputation for copying car designs from foreign rivals.

"We have to stop cutting corners in areas such as the environment, safety and intellectual property and create an industry that deserves to be called a leading global player in the truest sense," he said.

F1 China faces uncertain future

By Huang Daohen

The 2009 Chinese Grand Prix crowned German racer Sebastian Vettel, sponsored by Red Bull, this weekend in Shanghai, but the race's future in China after 2010 remains uncertain due to continued losses.

The seven-year contract between Shanghai and the Formula One (F1) management company expires next year, and if a deal cannot be reached before the announcement of the 2011 F1 schedule, the 2010 Chinese Grand Prix (GP) will be F1's last meet in China.

As of press time, the future of these negotiations looks grim.

Local media in Shanghai estimated that losses for the city to host the event may reach some 5 billion yuan, and they openly doubted F1's viability in China during an economic downturn.

"What on earth is F1 doing in China? As far as I know, F1 racers do not much like the Chinese GP," said Chen Bin, an auto industry analyst and senior editor with Shanghai-based *Auto Magazine*.

Chen attributed F1's arrival to China's increasing importance in the world economy. "Economic growth in China will create new customers who want Western products. That is the theory," he said, "Everyone wants to make a killing in China."

But for the hosting city, there is little chance it will ever make any money. The astonishing expenses of circuit construction and annual F1 dues are enough to cripple most Asian cities, Chen said.

Shanghai has a population of at least 20 million, but F1 ticket prices are too expensive for ordinary people, he added.

Chen said the event's development was more a political concern. The government has long declared its intent to peacefully develop into a world power, and "the F1 race is the right gala to give China international status," he said.

However, F1 seems to believe that going to China is a good thing. F1 Chief Bernie Ecclestone said last week that he was confident the Chinese GP will remain.

"I am sure it will," he said, "As long as there is China, we will be here. Asia is growing while lots of parts of the world are dying. That is the difference."

Ecclestone has been the driving force behind F1's expansion into Asia, which now hosts a grand prix in Malaysia, China, Bahrain, Singapore, Japan and Abu Dhabi.



Whether the F1 race will remain in China after 2010 remains uncertain.

CFP Photo

Sial China shows food and drink of the world

By Zhao Hongyi

Grape wines, alcohols, olive oils, fashion foods and innovative cooking demos will be at the 10th China International Food, Beverage & Hospitality Exhibition from May 19-21 in Shanghai.

The annual event, organized by Sial China and China Business Development Center, will gather international food producers, processors and their Chinese counterparts for idea exchanges and business transactions. The fair will invite commercial giants like Carrefour, Metro and Gourmedis to place purchasing orders.

The international section of this year's exhibition will have products from four sectors: food, wine & spirits, hospitality and services and food processing. As many as 1,100 exhibitors from around the world will display their products and technologies at the fair.

The grape wine tasting and competition, being held for its 10th year, is the focus. OliveAsia, Asia's only olive oil contest, and innovative food competitions and cooking demos are other attractions.

Mexico was named the VIP country for this year's exhibition. The embassy has brought Mexican food, wines and culinary culture to China for the exhibition to promote Mexico as a tourist destination.

Snack and candy displays will show off one of China's fastest growing food sectors, and the coffee and coffee ware zone will gather suppliers, chain stores and consumers to sample world java.

One corner of the exhibition will be dedicated to Chinese ingredients and spices, a cornerstone of the flavor of Chinese cooking.

In addition to the exhibition, Packtech & Foodtech, which collects food processing and packaging technologies, will also be held.

French black wine tests local tastes

By He Jianwei

A French wine association is bringing Malbec black wine to China for the first time. The wine left Cahors, birthplace of the black grape in southwestern France, and arrived Monday at the Huangcheng Shifu restaurant.

The professional association of Cahors winegrowers, Union Interprofessionnelle des vins de Cahors (UIVC), launched its marketing campaign for Malbec in 2006.

"Although the US was in one of its worst financial years last year, sales in the US grew over 50 percent," Jeremy Arnaud, marketing director of UIVC, said.

Since the Middle Ages, Malbec has been known as the "black wine." "The Malbec grape growing on the Cahors areas produces a very dark wine: Cahors is not red, it is dark," Arnaud said.

The brands of black wine they brought for the Chinese market are priced at around 130 yuan in supermarkets.

"It is popular in the American market, and Argentina is our only competitor. We are the first to enter to Chinese market," he said.

Fraud in China soccer reemerges

By Huang Daohen

The Chinese soccer world is desperate for a victory, even at an international middle school championships, to give its reputation a much-needed boost. But too much emphasis on winning can push teams to cheat.

Daping High School in Chongqing became the latest target of a scandal in local sporting circles. The school's girls soccer team won an international tournament in Turkey last week, but most of its players

were allegedly not students, but professional players from the junior national team, Xinhua New Agency reported.

According to regulations posted on the Web site of the event organizer, the International School Sport Federation, all players must be full-time students of the school they represent.

But Daping's team drafted several members of the national youth team before it went to the World Middle School Soccer Championships, an annual inter-

national meet that promotes sports and friendship.

The Chinese team beat Turkey, Brazil, Sweden and Italy in early matches, before defeating France in the semis and Germany in the final.

Zhang Jianqiang, director of the women's football department of the China Football Association (CFA), confirmed April 16 that the team only had three substitute players from Daping High School. The other 15 players came from other parts of the country.

Zhang said that although the entire team was composed of CFA members, the association had nothing to do with the player substitutions.

The Chongqing Sports Bureau and the Education Bureau are investigating the case. If fraud is proven, the school will be ordered to return the tournament cup and apologize to the International School Sport Federation. As of press time, calls to Daping High School went unanswered.

Comment

Participation more important

There will always be chances to win world championships.

Participation is more important than the results of games. This is an attitude we must hold whenever we send a team to international sporting competitions.

— Song Xianwen, journalist

Return the cup

What the school did was obviously cheating. The team should return the cup. We should let students know: They should celebrate honesty, not cheating.

— Anita, financial consultant

It was the players' decision

It does not matter where the team's players came from; winning the cup was the point. Besides, the players decided on their own to join the Chongqing Daping School's team.

— Rui Lee, IT engineer



Many say Daping High School's girls soccer team cheated.
Photo provided by Chongqing Daily

Expert view

Substitution or asking professional players for help is a common phenomenon in matches in China, but this is not allowed in higher-level competitions.

The idea behind this is easy to understand: to make the game more competitive and exciting for spectators, not to win.

But in the past decades, winning became a must in sporting competitions, especially in international tournaments. Winners were given huge monetary rewards by the government at different levels and by enterprises.

The media have also associated world champions with winning honors for the country, which has put a lot of pressure on players and coaches. I think this is the reason why coaches at Daping agreed to substitute players. They knew Chinese soccer needed a victory.

But for soccer players in China, it's high time we put competitions in their proper context. Only when the whole nation can enjoy the fun of soccer can the sport go further.

— Cai Wei, soccer coach and former national team player

Comment

Misunderstanding

These guidelines can only be implemented in certain situations, such as when facing a subject who uses violence against authorities. The city administration enforcement squads also have the right to self-defense. We put "leave no blood on the face, no wounds on the body" in the hope that the chengguan members would not need to resort to fighting.

— Gao Feng, public security expert and the textbook's co-author

Violence really exists

Not all chengguan are trained before they start duty, and they usually use violence on the street. The situation in big cities such as Beijing is better. But it is true that when the city administration enforcement was set up, most of the staff were crooks in uniform.

— Qin Yuexuan, former chengguan member in Tianjin

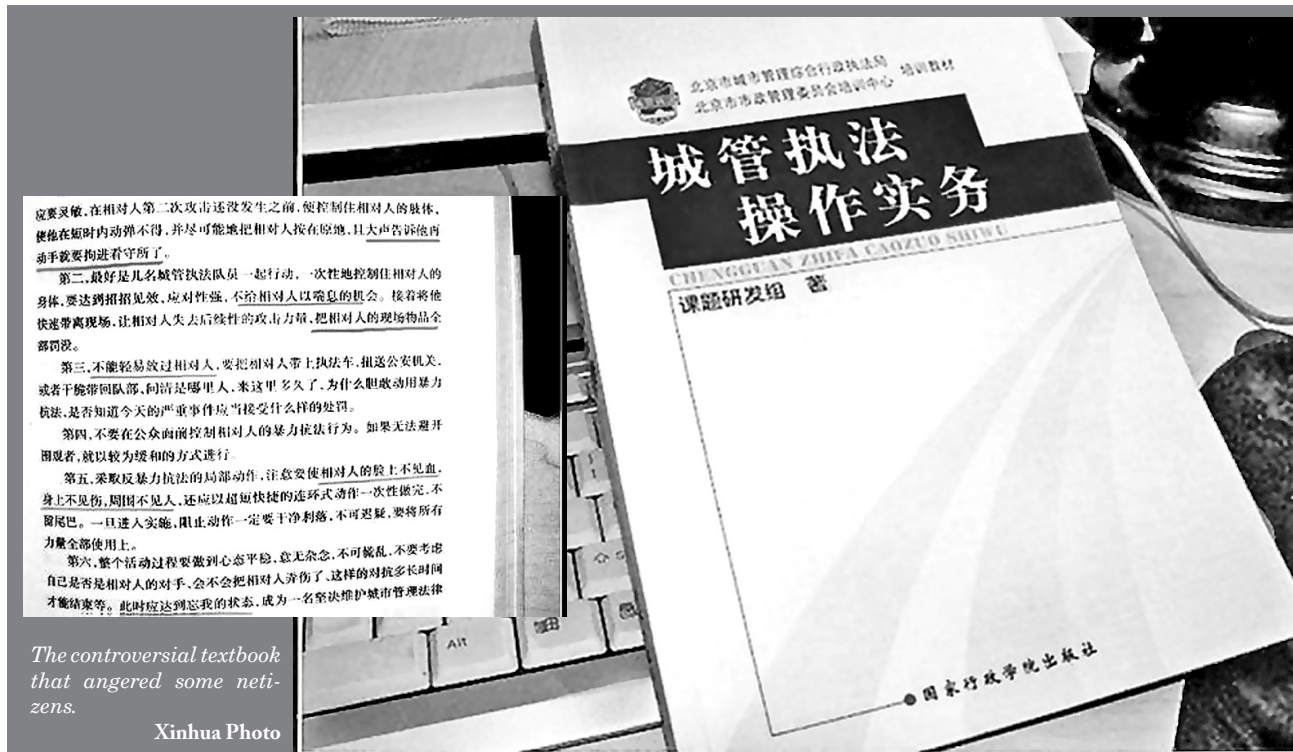
Chengguan versus the police

If such words were written in a textbook for riot police officers, no one will say anything because the police is authorized by law to use violence against unlawful behavior.

The guidelines were created to help the chengguan resolve conflicts. But the most important thing is to find out the reason for such violent behavior.

— Zhang Tianwei, news critic

Street administrators also need textbooks



The controversial textbook that angered some netizens.
Xinhua Photo

By Wang Yu

City administration enforcement squads, or *chengguan*, have a bad image because of many media reports of the violence they inflict on unlicensed street vendors. A recent article that has made the rounds online suggests that, maybe, *chengguan* are taught to be mean.

Zhao Yang, 34, a *chengguan* in Nanjing's Xuanwu district who posted the article, mentioned excerpts from a textbook that teaches him and his colleagues how to carry out their duties. "When dealing with the subject,

be sure not to leave any blood on the face or wounds on the body, and be sure there are no people around. Be quick to finish the whole process," he quoted. Zhao also posted pictures from the book.

This revelation angered some netizens. Beijing's Chaoyang district denied the existence of such a book. Meanwhile, Shanghai's *chengguan* said they have their own training manuals that do not include the entries that Zhao mentioned.

Photos posted by Zhao revealed that his textbook was

published by the National Academy of Administration Press. The publishing house admitted to issuing the book in 2006.

Another book entry says, "Do not think about whether you can match the subject or not, whether you will hurt the subject or how long it will take to resolve the conflict. As a law enforcer, you must reach a state of detachment to staunchly protect the city administration's dignity."

Zhao posted the article in July 2007 on xici.net, "Home of the Chengguan Administration." He has been a *chengguan* for over 10

years and has exposed many of the squads' abuses. Although he said he does not condone their violent behavior, Zhao thinks some of the tips are effective in combating illegal street sellers.

"It really works when we carry out our duties on the street. What is violence? When we face the same violence to uphold the law, shouldn't we be entitled to self-defense? Usually we have to confiscate the subject's goods and this easily leads to conflict. Violence is not good, but until now we haven't found a better substitute," Zhao said.

Fashion buyer finds Beijing scene 'inspiring'

By Sha Xingzhe

The buyer of Hong Kong-based Lane Crawford department stores was so impressed by Beijing's fashion scene he said he would come back for inspiration.

Bernard Gregory Thomas, who came to town last week, worked with famous London fashion retailer Browns for 12 years before joining Lane Crawford. He came on board the luxury goods department store chain in

2006 to expand its menswear line. The store has a branch at Seasons Place Shopping Center in Xicheng District.

Thomas's job is to fly all over the world to pick new clothes that will go into Lane Crawford's shelves. He came to Beijing to put together a collection for their local store, and to meet VIP customers.

"I'd like to arrange some personal shopping time, but my

schedule is quite tight. Normally I'd go around to see some galleries," he said.

When asked for tips in choosing items from brand names like Dior, Gucci and Alexander McQueen, Thomas said he does not have rules written in stone. "There is just a feel. If I love it, then I will pick it," he said. He brings this expertise to Lane Crawford, which is known for its marvelous line of designer clothes.

Thomas finds Beijing's fashion scene very interesting. "There is a lot of stuff going on," he said. He also finds the capital's underground culture fascinating. "I love underground galleries, concerts and arts, which we don't get so much in Hong Kong. Those give me inspiration when I pick clothes."

It seems like the start of another foreigner's love affair with the city.



Bernard Gregory Thomas
Photo by Mike Wang

I love 'ghost training'



Bland weighed 284.5 kilograms when he arrived at the hospital last year.
Photo by Ma Cheng

By Zhao Hongyi

Alonzo Bland, an overweight man from the US, apologized to his Chinese doctors for running away from his weight loss program at the Tianjin Aimin Hospital when he returned April 21.

Bland, 32, went to the hospital last May weighing 284.5 kilograms. He vowed to shed 90 kilograms through the hospital's renowned "ghost training" program. His stay was going well until February, when he received a letter from his parents saying his father in Chicago was seriously ill.

Because Bland was already at the critical third phase of the program, his doctors forbade him to leave. He decided to escape from the hospital and flew back to the US, leaving a disc with a recorded apology.

"I'm awfully sorry," Bland told his doctor Su Zhixin on Tuesday.

"My parents were very surprised at the progress I've made losing weight, and persuaded me to continue the program back here," said Bland, who was accompanied by his girlfriend from the US. While he was in the States, he managed to lose another 10 kilograms, and now weighs 150 kilograms.

"This time, I hope I can lose 25 kilograms each month," Bland said. "I have confidence in my hospital." He said his girlfriend will supervise his training for the rest of the program, which both of them



Bland shed 130 kilograms in less than a year.
CFP Photo

described as "a miracle."

"I will bring the training program back to the US to let more people know the miracle of Chinese medicine, and help more overweight guys have a normal body and life," Bland said.

Tianjin Aimin Hospital has made a name for its successful weight loss programs. The hospital has treated hundreds of patients, including those from abroad, under its custom-made "ghost training" program.

Traveler recovers wallet in subway drama

By Zheng Lu

A missing wallet ended up bringing the Austrian embassy's consul general to the Beijing Public Security Bureau (PSB) on Monday.

"Thank you for not only handling the case, but also for the extra help you offered a citizen of my country," Fritz Pokorny, the Austrian diplomat, told officials at the PSB's Administration Division of Exit and Entry.

Two weeks ago, an Austrian named Dieter Bowing, who was also Pokorny's secondary school classmate, visited Beijing. After taking a stroll along Wangfujing Street, Bowing walked to the Dongdan subway station to catch the train. When he got to the station's crowded platform, a Mongolian man sidled up to him and took his wallet from his trousers pocket. Bowing later said he had no clue his pocket was picked.

After the pickpocket got a hold of Bowing's wallet, he decided not to enter the subway carriage and moved away from the queue. He did not know, however, that several plainclothes police officers had been observing his weird behavior and witnessed the theft.

As soon as he stepped out of the queue, police officers rushed up to arrest him. The pickpocket, who was a huge man, struggled fiercely and threw Bowing's wallet into the crowded subway carriage to get rid of the evidence.

Meanwhile, another officer chased Bowing, who was already on the subway and was oblivious to the drama unfolding a few feet away from him. The police officer caught up with Bowing and asked him to get off to help with the investigation.

The confused and slightly nervous Bowing, who did not speak Chinese, got off the train. The subway doors immediately shut behind him, carrying away the wallet he did not know he already lost.

The police officers radioed their colleagues at the next subway station to look for the wallet. But the carriage was packed with too many people, which made a thorough search difficult.

The pickpocket was arrested and brought to a police station along with Bowing, who still had no clue what was going on. He called Pokorny, the consul general, for help.

"After making it clear to him what happened," Pokorny said, "I told him that he did not have to worry since he did not commit any crime."

Bowing said his wallet contained 1,000 yuan and around €100 (900 yuan), as well as his identification cards. Since he had no more cash with him, the police drove him back to his hotel.

During the ride, Bowing received a phone call from a colleague in Austria who asked whether he had lost his wallet. A French resident in Beijing apparently found his wallet on the subway, saw his employer's contact information and emailed the company. The police immediately rerouted to the French man place to retrieve Bowing's wallet.

"It was the first time Bowing traveled to China. Although losing his wallet was an unpleasant experience, he said he was moved by what the policemen did for him," Pokorny said. Bowing lauded the police officers' efforts to capture the thief before he even knew his wallet was lost. "He entrusted me to say thank you to the police before he left for Austria," the consul general said.

"I myself have experienced thefts in Europe," Pokorny said, adding that such unpleasant experiences were common in tourist areas. The diplomat also said that in the past few years, many Chinese nationals have gone to his embassy to return items that belonged to Austrian travelers, which they found on the street or in a taxi.

"We are improving our professional skills and our foreign language abilities," a PSB official told Pokorny. "We understand that foreigners may feel lost when they encounter problems here. We will work harder to solve problems quicker and to help travelers feel at ease."

The PSB said the pickpocket remains under detention.

US embassy plans bigger visa office to cope with applicants

By Han Manman

The US embassy moved to a larger compound only half a year ago, but its visa office is already getting cramped with the rapidly growing number of Chinese applicants.

The embassy is considering enlarging its visa office, Linda Donahue, the embassy's consul general, said Wednesday. China's US visa office, along with the ones in Brazil, Mexico and India, are the four busiest in the world, she said.

The embassy is planning to construct another building beside the visa office to remove the US Citizen Service Center, which currently occupies the building's second floor.

Donahue said they plan to move the Chinese Citizen Service to the second floor, and increase the number of service windows from the current 23 to 33. The plan is expected to take effect in 2012.

Donahue said US visas have not become more difficult to obtain, despite the public's impression. "There is no quota for Chinese tourists and students that can go to the US, contrary to what you may have heard," she said.

She reminded the public to apply for a US visa early, and for



A visa official tells an applicant the right way to submit the fingerprints.

Photo by Lily Jia

frequent travelers to make sure their visas remained valid since applications peak in early May until August.

The visa office has 20 officers, but they have to cope with an average of 1,200 visa interviewees per day, said Travis Sevy, vice consul of the consular section. This gives each interviewee only one to three minutes in front of the officer.

Sevy warned students to be wary of visa agents who promise an immediate interview at the embassy in exchange for money. He said students can apply for an "urgent" interview for free.

Sevy denied claims made online that US visa officials discriminate against unmarried women under 30 who do not own a house and a car. "We will assess

applicants based on their individual situations. We don't hold a prejudice against any applicant," he said. He suggested that applicants prepare as many documents as possible to support their visa application.

Last year, the US embassy issued 460,000 visas within China, an increase of 12.5 percent compared to 2007.

Extravaganza to showcase European culture

By Han Manman

European culture will be on display at Chaoyang Park on May 23 to 24 as the EU Extravaganza presents highlights of the continent's food and music.

"This event brings together all of our 27 member-states – from Ireland on the north Atlantic Seaboard to Cyprus on the shores of the Middle East; from Finland in the Arctic Circle to Spain across the straits from Africa," Serge Abou, EU Ambassador to China, said. "We can offer cultural diversity, a variety of food and drink and an incredible array of musical talent."

Abou said the event aims to broaden the Chinese public's knowledge about the EU, that there is more to the union than better-known states such as the UK, France, Germany, Italy and Spain.

"We want to show the Chinese public the diversity of culture among the newer and smaller member states too. We want to show the Chinese people that Europe is much more than just the major nations which they may already be familiar with, and to encourage them to broaden

their horizons on Europe in terms of travel, education and food and drink," said Vitezslav Grepl, ambassador of the Czech Republic, the current holder of the revolving EU presidency.

"This festival comes at an opportune time for EU-China relations, in which the two sides are determined to bring their partnership to new heights with a number of high-level visits, as well as two summits scheduled for 2009, and a common will to face the global challenges of the financial crisis and climate change together," Abou said.

The Czechs are providing the event's headline act with the band Czechomor, whose music is said to exude raw vitality and reflect the nation's Bohemian and Moravian roots.

The extravaganza will also feature Hungarian string quartet Quartet alla Ungharesca, Bulgarian pop singer Yordanka, piano soloist Mina Ivanova, China-based French guitarist Frederick and other acts from Austria, Denmark, Romania and Slovenia.

Food from some of Beijing's top European restaurants will also be on offer.

Beijing sees first cotton kite-flying event



Kite flying is a familiar sight in China, but not many people have flown kites made of cotton. To celebrate Wednesday's World Earth Day, the Cotton Council International and Cotton Incorporated from the US sponsored the country's first cotton kite-flying event in Chaoyang Park last weekend. Hundreds of cotton kites adorned with original creative designs dotted the sky, creating a unique city view.

Xinhua Photo

Canada Tourism warms up for 2010 Winter Olympics

By Venus Lee

The Canadian Tourism Commission's (CTC) road show in China ended last weekend, but the organization's efforts to draw more Chinese visitors to Canada is just getting started.

The road show's last day at the Beijing Qiaobo Ski Center featured sporting games for the media, seen as a teaser to the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver.

"We are very proud and excited that Canada will be the focus of the world next year as it holds the 2010 Winter Olympic Games. The road show has heightened awareness of Canada as the leading four-season leisure destination," Derek Galpin, regional director of CTC for China and Japan, said.

"Canada will not only be a place where Chinese Olympic athletes compete for medals, but also the destination about which travel stories will excitedly be shared by Chinese tourists," he said.

The mascots of the Vancouver Olympics – Miga, Quatchi and Sumi – were present to cheer on the 40 journalists who participated in the games.

The Spring Road Show kicked off in Shanghai, made its way to Guangzhou and came to Beijing. The eight-day show was organized by CTC in collaboration with Tourism British Columbia, Travel Alberta and Ontario Tourism.

The CTC said, China remains one of the key markets for Canadian tourism. Last year, at least 160,000 tourists and businessmen from the mainland visited Canada. This January, the number went up by 23 percent compared to the same period last year.

"The appreciation of the yuan directly reduces the cost of outbound tourism," Galpin said.

Galpin said that the Canadian Federal Budget this year earmarked an additional CA\$20 million (110 million yuan) for CTC in the next two years in order to expand their investments in emerging markets. This was on top of the commission's annual budget of CA\$76 million.

"The Spring road show in China demonstrates our strong focus on the Chinese market. The additional funding for China from the Canada Federal Budget will be channeled into a campaign to also increase awareness of Canada as a major MICE (Meetings Incentives Conventions and Exhibitions) destination, with particular emphasis on corporate incentive travel," Galpin said.

H&M fashion sets up shop in Qianmen



H&M's shopping party Wednesday night

Photo by Zhou Wenjuan

By Han Sen

Swedish fashion brand H&M arrived in Beijing with a bang Wednesday, with a party at its new store in Qianmen in which thousands of fans rushed to take advantage of an opening sale.

As with any local debut of an international brand, celebrities flocked to the affair. Among those present were Taiwanese model Joe Zheng, singer Zhang Xiaochen and model Zhang Liang.

Guests enjoyed a 20 percent discount on the brand's latest collection. When H&M opened its first mainland store in Shanghai in 2007, fans in Beijing would fly south just to go shopping there. Local airline companies might now lose some of their business.

"Every time I went to Shanghai, I spent as much as 1,000 yuan on their clothes," 28-year-old Wang Xuru said. Her purchases would consist of five dresses and three fashion accessories — a steal at that price for H&M's quality products.

Wang said she set aside 3,000 yuan specifically for the brand's opening night in Beijing.

The event's guest of honor was Ann-Sofie Johansson, the company's head of design, who flew from Stockholm on Tuesday evening.

"We have several trends or styles to choose from," Johansson said. She brought with her H&M's latest collection, which was inspired by the wild. "We

have animal patterns this season, the leopard, stripes," she said.

"We do not produce garments specifically for the Chinese market, because I think fashion is a global thing," the designer said. "People who wear H&M garments feel good about themselves. They have confidence and they know how to match clothes." Johansson said she believes the brand will continue to grow, especially with the support of loyal customers.

Cycle in Yunnan for youth charity group

By Annie Wei

For those people who want to cycle in Yunnan while helping others, the event "Roots & Shoots Yunnan Bicycle Challenge" started accepting participants this week.

It is an adventure philanthropy bicycle rally crossing through some of the most ethnically diverse, culturally rich and naturally scenic areas. The route begins in Lijiang, Yunnan, crosses through the Mosu minority communities at Lugu lake in Sichuan and finally ends in Xichang, Sichuan Province.

The ride is scheduled from September 26 to October 4, with a distance of 330 kilometers.

The cost for each rider is 13,500 yuan, 2,000 yuan of which will go to Roots & Shoots.

The charity is a non-profit environmental and community education program for the youth, established by Jan Goodall with young people in Tanzania.

Roots & Shoots started programs in China in 2000. There

are now over 400 groups all over the country.

Registration opened Tuesday and the deadline is May 31. As there is a limit for this ride, 15-team with with two participants each team, anyone interested should check out chiancharitychallenge.org and apply as soon as possible.

Event

Pinnacle Avenue Family Day

This series of events, which is geared toward families who live in central Beijing, will introduce shops that sell children's clothes and toys, Chinese and Western restaurants, children's playgrounds and markets. It also aims to inform participants about animal protection organizations, medical groups and public utility issues.

When: April 25-26, 9 am - 5 pm

Where: Pinnacle Avenue, Liyuan Lu (near by British School of Beijing), Tianzhu Town, Shunyi District

Tel: 8046 2500 (look for Zhao Jun)

Cost: Free

Hook 'n' Cook Speedating

The event will pair eight men and eight women, who will be given a role in preparing an exquisite dinner. People who have little to no training in the kitchen need not fear. "Speedating Specialists" will prepare the recipes and ingredients before the participants arrive. All that participants have to do is choose a recipe and a partner and try their best. Organizers will be on hand to guide throughout the entire process.

When: April 26, 5:30 pm

Where: The Hutong (south of Gui Jie), Dongzhimen Nei, Dongcheng District

Web site:

Speedatingbeijing.spaces.live.com

Cost: 180 yuan (covers dinner and a drink)

Neue Stimmen International Singing Competition

The annual competition aims to discover young opera singing talent, promote budding singers and help them build professional careers. Music lovers are welcome to watch the show.

Where: Concert Hall, Central Conservatory of Music, 160 Fuxingmen Nei Dajie, Xicheng District

When: May 1-4, 10 am - 10 pm

Tel: 6551 2811 ext. 826

(By Wei Ying)

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Hundreds of jobs offered to expats at state job fair



The job fair attracts 1,200 foreigners.

Photo by Zhang Yan

By Zhao Hongyi

Are you in despair over ever finding a job in Beijing or China? The State Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs (SAFEA) held its annual job fair in the city last weekend in which 70 corporations, institutes and agencies participated, both Chinese and foreign.

The event, Chinajob.com Job Fair, listed 800 available positions for foreigners. Big-name domestic recruiters included China Daily, China Radio International, Capital Steel Group and Tsinghua University.

Some were groups based in other cities, like the Dalian Commodity Exchange, Shangqiu Normal University and Tianjin Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs.

Foreign firms also participated, like the British Council, Reuters news agency and Japanese broadcaster NHK.

Over 1,200 expats visited the job fair held at Swissotel, according to SAFEA. Most of them said they were satisfied with the jobs they found, either at this year's fair or in previous years.

"In China, the jobs are generally speaking quite stable," said James Harold, from the US, who has been working in Beijing for three years at a US-owned call center. "You can get the salary and benefits you're looking for," he said.

Dominique Vennon from Quebec, Canada, who has been in China for three years, hopes to find a spot at China Radio International. "I hope I can win," he

said after handing in his resume at the radio broadcaster's booth.

Interestingly, many of the visitors and applicants were Chinese youngsters who studied overseas. They were driven back home by the global economic downturn, and tried their luck at the fair.

"I believe that I fulfill all the criteria listed by many companies," Zhang Hai, a Beijinger who obtained his bachelor's degree in the US, said.

"We prefer foreigners even if you have the same language ability," Yang Jingwen, from the Shenyang Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs, said.

"Considering the need to deal with foreign counterparts in the future, 80 percent of recruiters prefer foreigners,"

said Zhong Yanguang, chief of the Foreign Experts Information and Study Center, the job fair's co-organizer.

But Zhong said they plan to lower the criteria for applicants to give opportunities to more people.

SAFEA holds annual job fairs in Beijing, Tianjin, Shanghai, Nanjing, Hangzhou and Shenzhen, where the demand for expats is high. The fair in Shanghai is set for next Saturday at the Shanghai Everbright Convention & Exhibition Center International Hotel.

The list of job vacancies is available on chinajob.com, safea.gov.cn and this week's edition of *Beijing Review*. For more information about the fairs and vacancies, call 6894 8899, or email jobfair@chinajob.com.

Price of courtyard houses immune to financial crisis

By Venus Lee

The sale and transfer of *siheyuan* or courtyard houses has increased since a new regulation on old Beijing homes took effect March 1.

"The regulation encourages individuals and units to purchase old houses and courtyards within the conservation district of historical sites. Private capital injections into *siheyuan* will help protect old courtyards," said Wen Hui, spokeswoman of Jingpinwanjia Real Estate Company.

The government can also help out. "Many old courtyards need to be renovated. If the owner wants to sell his or her *siheyuan* because he or she can't afford the renovation expenses, the person can ask for help from the government," Wang Qiang, spokesman of the Municipal Construction Committee (MCC), said.

"Would-be buyers might be better off working with big real estate firms, since the property rights of many old courtyards

are not clear. But the status of properties that agents control are clearly defined," she said.

There are 10,000 old courtyard homes in Beijing; among them, only 2,000 have clearly defined property rights, Wen said.

Due to the shortage of *siheyuan* with clear property rights, the sale price or rental cost of these old homes has not bowed to the financial crisis, according to Jingpinwanjia Real Estate Company.

"The selling price of *siheyuan* vary depending on their location. A courtyard in a common area is 30,000 to 50,000 yuan per square meter," said Zhang Fan, spokesman of Shunyixing, an agency that sells and rents out *siheyuan*.

Buyers have to pay in one go; bank loans or installments are not permitted.

Since 2006, however, many would-be buyers have instead chosen to rent *siheyuan* because of their exorbitant cost, Zhang of Shunyixing real estate agency

said. "The annual rental cost of a 300 to 500-square-meter *siheyuan* in Dongcheng and Xicheng is 400,000 to 500,000 thousand."

Sales involving foreigners, however, need to be cleared by the Beijing Security Investigation Office for Foreign Projects. The office will assess if the deal involves an appropriate location or creates any "national security risks," Wen said. But the previous stipulation of a one-year residency in Beijing has been scrapped under the Regulations of Protection and Renovation of Beijing Old Town Houses in the Conservation District of Historical Sites.

New owners who want to renovate their *siheyuan* need to follow regulations that aim to protect the original feature of ancient architecture. They need to get permission from the Municipal Cultural Relics Bureau and the Municipal Commission of Urban Planning.

Ballroom dance competition calls for participants

By He Jianwei

Professional and amateur dancers, including teens and the blind, can compete in the Fifth Beijing Wuranqing Cup ballroom dancing contest to be held in June. Registration takes place May 1 to 30.

Contestants will be divided into four groups: professional dancers, amateurs, youth and the blind. Foreigners are welcome.

Participants will perform "international standards" including the waltz, tango, foxtrot and Viennese Waltz, and "International Latin," like the cha-cha, samba, paso doble and jive.

Each group can choose one or a combination of the following programs: Item A, five types of dance; Item B, four types; and Item C, three types.

Interested parties should register at the Wuranqing Ballroom Dance Club with an ID or passport. Alternatively, they

can download the entry form from danceheaven.com and mail it to the organizer.

Contestants need to pay a registration fee. For professional dancers, each pair must pay 200 yuan for the first item. Each subsequent item costs an extra 100 yuan. For amateurs, each pair must pay 100 yuan for the first item, and 50 yuan for each extra item.

Previous Wuranqing contests included foreign participants, some of whom won, the organizer said. The competition will be held at the Beijing College Students Stadium.

How to apply

Where: Wuranqing Ballroom Dance Club, Room 401, Haidian Culture Center, Building A Haidian Culture and Arts Building, 28-1 Zhongguancun Dajie, Haidian District

When: May 1-30
Tel: 5160 1368

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyi@ynet.com

Because of the turmoil in Thailand, I canceled my trip for the Songkran festival. Is there by any chance a similar festival in China?

Like the Thais, the annual Water-splashing Festival is the most important holiday for the Dai ethnic group. It is also known as the Festival for Bathing the Buddha. It usually starts in the middle of April, the sixth month in the Dai calendar, and lasts for half a month. You can see this festival in Xishuangbanna, Yunnan Province, home to the Dais and a culture similar to the Thai's.

I love kites and want to interact with locals who have the same passion. Are there any kite-flying competitions where I can meet these people?

You should check out the Grand International Kite Festival in Weifang, Shandong Province, known as "the cradle of the Chinese kite industry." The annual event, taking place next weekend, April 25 and 26, draws participants from around China and overseas. There you can also visit kite-making studios and meet the masters from whom you might be able to learn trade secrets.

I'm very interested in Italian culture, cuisine and wine, and would like to find a place where I can learn Italian cooking.

The Ritz-Carlton hotel's Barolo restaurant offers lessons in Italian culture and cuisine from April through September. For more information, call 5908 8888.

(By Venus Lee)



Beijing New Music Ensemble

By He Jianwei

In recent years, the Western classical music world has turned its spotlight on China's top orchestras and virtuosos.

Gramophone Magazine, the world's most authoritative classical music magazine, included the China Philharmonic Orchestra in its list of "The World's 10 Most Inspiring Orchestras" this month. Two years ago, *The New York Times* declared that "China at its best produces virtuosos who can compete worldwide."

There are a growing number of symphonies and solos performing in China. Chamber music, a specialized genre of classical, has a smaller audience and fewer virtuosos. Although its box office returns are quite poor, Chinese musicians have been ambitious in promoting it.

Twelve young Italian musicians from I Musici Chamber Orchestra performed the soundtracks of *The Godfather*, *Schindler's List* and *The Legend of 1900* at the concert hall of the National Center for Performing Arts (NCPA) last month.

Their orchestra received high remarks from Arturo Toscanini (1867-1957), one of the most acclaimed conductors of the late 19th and 20th century. After hearing I Musici perform, Toscanini said, "[These] twelve individual instrumental masters are together the finest chamber orchestra in the world."

Although the orchestra brought songs with which Chinese listeners were familiar, attendance paled in comparison to symphonies at the same hall.

Almost one week later, the NCPA announced it would host a May Festival to focus on chamber music. They said chamber music was not recognized by many classical music fans, but they showed courage by popularizing the form in China. "Who will promote chamber music if we don't do it?" Chen Zuohuang, director of music at the NCPA, said.

Alienated listeners

Music critic Zhang Kexin's harsh words capture the state of chamber music in China. "What is chamber music? It means 'what nobody listens to.'"

Maybe it was an exaggeration, but his words reflect the national view of courtly compositions.

Chamber music is written for small groups of instruments, which traditionally were fit for performance in a palace chamber. For more than 200 years, chamber music was played primarily by amateur musicians in their homes, and even today, when most chamber performances have migrated from the home to concert hall, there are still many musicians, both amateur and professional, who continue to play it.

Playing chamber music requires special skills, both musical and social, which are different from the skills required for playing solo or symphonic works.

In Beijing, there are only two professional chamber music orchestras. One is the Beijing New Music Ensemble, founded in 2005. Eli Marshall, winner of the 2007 Leo Kaplan Award, top prize for young composers with the American Society for Composers, is its artistic director.

The other is Chinese Cello Philharmonic Ensemble established by the cellist Zhu Yibing in 2004. Zhu made history when he became the first-ever Chinese to snatch a prize at an international cello competition, the 42nd Geneva International Cellist Competition. When he came back to China from Europe in 2004, he and his seven top students formed the ensemble. Members of the

ensemble were drawn from leading orchestras or were promising soloists.

Although the Chinese Cello Philharmonic Ensemble has a five-year history and has performed 100 times, only seven performances were commercial. In the last few months they held five commercial performances in Shanghai, Hangzhou, Guangzhou, Hong Kong and Shenzhen.

Chamber music has few listeners in China because it is too exquisite, Zhang said. "Symphonies are magnified and intense, and can easily attract listeners. But chamber music is more delicate, subtle and sensitive, and the audience must be patient to listen to what it tries to express," he said.

Patience is not something for which Chinese listeners are known.

Marginalized in school

China has world-famous soloists, like the pianists Li Yundi and Lang Lang, but seldom great chamber music orchestras. It takes a back seat in music schools, and few students choose it as their major. It is, at present, an elective course.

In Chinese music schools, teachers strive to produce soloists. Individual scores and the results of competitions are more important.

But in Western countries, only top students can be recommended to study in the colleges where soloists are trained, like the Juilliard School of Music. Most average students will be trained in chamber music, because it is the stepping stone to symphony orchestra, said Han Xiao-Ming, a horn soloist and professor of horn and chamber music at the Musikhochschule of Saarland in Germany since 1992.

Chamber music is regarded as the highest level for instrument performance and the basis for developing a symphony. Music critic Liu Xuefeng once compared chamber music to a cell of symphony. "The Western orchestras emphasize chamber music training because it will reinforce cooperation among musicians."

The result is a music system that master cellist Wang Jian laments. "If 10 Chinese soloists perform individually, they will shock their listeners: but put those 10 people together in an orchestra and they can hardly cooperate," he said.

Many parents send their children to study music in hopes they can be a star. But the fact is that few can be the next Li Yundi or Lang Lang, and the dream of being a soloist may never come true. "If music students choose to perform for their career, the reality is they will work in an orchestra," Zhu said.

Some music schools have caught on.

For instance, the Central Conservatory of Music has set up a teaching and research section for chamber music, and performance of chamber music has become an assessment for students' final scores.

Zhu said in last year's CCTV violin and piano competitions there was a section for co-performance. "It was definitely a pleasant surprise for the future of chamber music."

Popularizing chamber music

To promote chamber music not only to the musicians, but also to audiences, the NCPA has invited 10 excellent chamber orchestras from home and abroad to perform next month.

Eight soloists from the cello group and brass group of Berlin Philharmonic and the soloist group of the Vienna Philharmonic form one chamber music band which is famous world over.

Sabine Meyer, a German classical clarinetist, formed Trio Di Clarone in 1983 with her brother Wolfgang and the clarinetist Reiner Wehle. Their interest in how chamber music may have sounded when originally performed has played an important role in world music development.

"Compared with symphonies, chamber music has fewer listeners not only in China, but also in other countries. But several people playing several pieces can perform something profound," the music director at the NCPA said.

To hope more people can get into the concerts, the NCPA has forced a low-price policy. The cheapest ticket is 80 yuan.

Chen said he hopes chamber music will continue after next month as a frequent show at the NCPA.

He said the to-be-completed fourth hall of the NCPA would be a small hall. "It will accommodate within 550 people and is suitable for chamber music performances. Although the name of the hall has not been decided, I can say it will have more performances of chamber music," he said.

Chinese musicians like Zhu and his ensemble also devote themselves in popularizing chamber music. Last month's performances in southern China "had no sponsorships and the musicians bore part of the travel expenses. We have received good feedback from Shanghai and Guangzhou already. And we believe the market for chamber music in China is promising," Zhu said.

ing note

Chamber music falls on deaf ears

13
Center stage



“Symphonies are magnified and intense, and can easily attract listeners. But chamber music is more delicate, subtle and sensitive, and the audience must be patient to listen to what it tries to express.”

The to-be-completed fourth hall of the NCPA would be a small hall. “It will accommodate within 550 people and is suitable for chamber music performances. Although the name of the hall has not been decided, I can say it will have more performances of chamber music.”

Sabine Meyer, a German classical clarinetist, formed Trio Di Clarone in 1983, whose interest in how chamber music may have sounded when originally performed has played an important role in world music development.

Photo provided by the National Center for Performing Arts

BEIJING TODAY

Editor: He Jianwei Designer: Deng Ning

Learn finance from a historical novel

By Jin Zhu

Although a financial history of the world seems like a topic too profound for the casual reader, Harvard economic historian Niall Ferguson makes it clear and gripping.

The Ascent of Money (464pp, Penguin Press, US \$29.95), Ferguson's newest book, explores the current financial crisis. It is an account of "moolah" from the Incas to the credit crunch and an argument for the centrality of finance throughout human history.

One way to sort out the financial chaos is to look at the past. "Putting today's crisis into the context of financial history is one of the important parts of this book. Although it is too late to warn investors about expensive houses and financiers about cheap credit, looking back may suggest what to do next," Vinay Dixit, senior director in McKinsey Asia Consumer Centers, said after reading the book.

"Bread, cash, dosh, dough, loot, lucre, moolah, readies and the where-withal: call it what you like, money matters," Ferguson wrote. His early chapters examine major financial events and other special historical moments.

Spain, for example, exploited many silver mines in Peru from 1556 to 1783 to ship home 170 tons of the precious

metal every year. However, Spain did not become rich because of its currency. On the contrary, it ended up in a deep recession. Ferguson said Spain's error shows why functions to promote the development of economic entities are more important than currency.

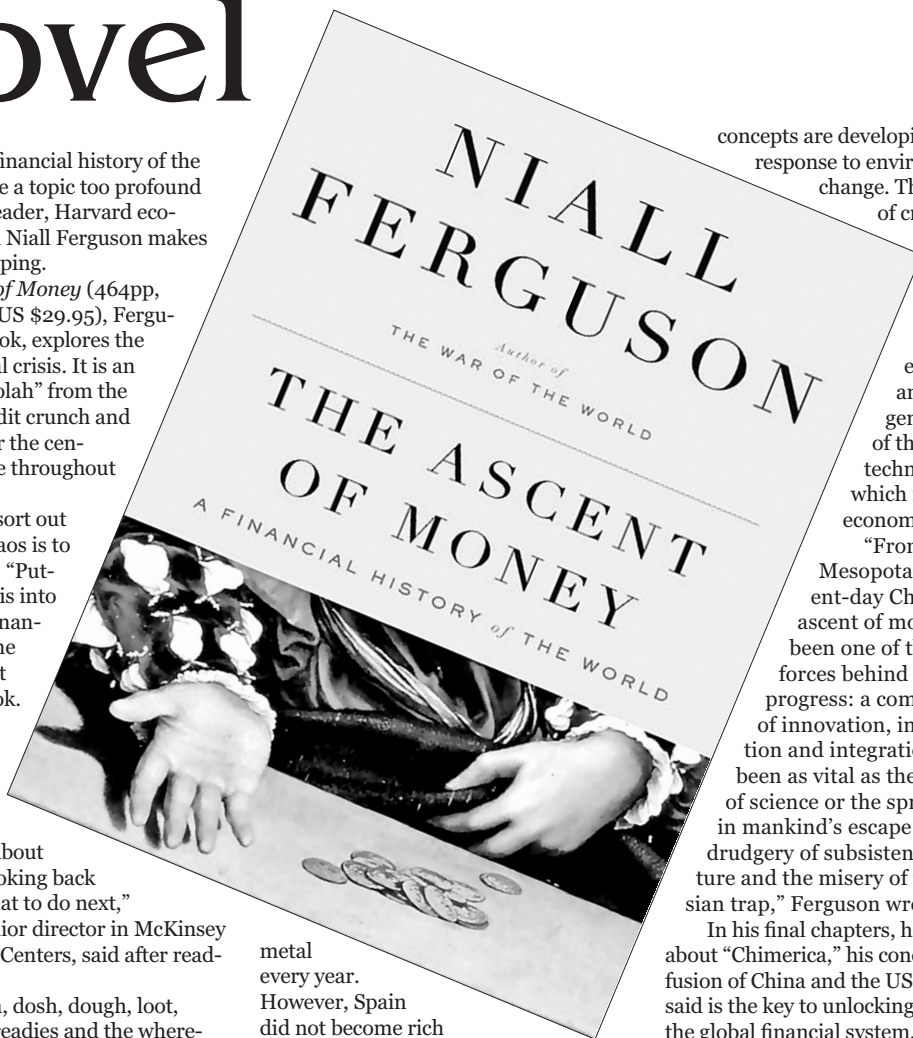
Ferguson also said new financial

concepts are developing in response to environmental change. The sequence of creation, selection and destruction is like Darwinian evolution, and it has generated many of the financial techniques on which modern economies depend.

"From ancient Mesopotamia to present-day China ... the ascent of money has been one of the driving forces behind human progress: a complex process of innovation, intermediation and integration that has been as vital as the advance of science or the spread of law in mankind's escape from the drudgery of subsistence agriculture and the misery of the Malthusian trap," Ferguson wrote.

In his final chapters, he talked about "Chimerica," his conceptual fusion of China and the US, which he said is the key to unlocking and fixing the global financial system.

"If the relationship between the two countries breaks down, then all bets are off, for the US and indeed for Asia. Both sides would stand to lose from a breakdown of Chimerica, which is why both sides are affirming a commitment to it," Ferguson said.



Vinay Dixit's recommendation:

"If you want to know something about the development of the financial market, but without having to understand obscure, technical terms, this book is a good choice."

Vinay Dixit is the senior director in McKinsey Asia Consumer Centers, which advises leading companies on how to respond to the economy in their strategic, organizational and technological operations.

Bookworm book listing

Vivian Wang from the Bookworm recommends the following best sellers to *Beijing Today* readers.

The China Price: The True Cost of Chinese Competitive Advantage

By Alexandra Harney, 352pp, Penguin, US \$16.00

Former *Financial Times* correspondent Alexandra Harney uncovers a story of immense significance: how our factory economy gains a competitive edge by selling out its workers, environment and future. The eye-opening expose offers a first-time intimate look at the defining business story of our era.

2666: A Novel

By Roberto Bolano, 912pp, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, US \$30.00

Its throng of unforgettable characters includes academics and convicts, an American sportswriter, an elusive German novelist and a teenage student and her widowed, mentally unstable father. Their lives intersect in the urban sprawl of Santa Teresa – a fictional Juarez – on the US-Mexico border, where hundreds of young factory workers, in the novel as in life, have disappeared.

Beijing Confidential: A Tale of Comrades Lost and Found

By Jan Wong, 336pp, Anchor Canada, US \$34.95

In the early 1970s, Jan Wong traveled from Canada to become one of only two Westerners to study at Beijing University. One day, a young stranger, Yin Luoyi, asked for help in getting to the US. Wong immediately reported Yin to the authorities. Thirty three years on, and more than a decade after the publication of her bestselling *Red China Blues*, Jan Wong revisits the Chinese capital to search for the person who has haunted her conscience. She wants to apologize, to somehow make amends: to know whether Yin survived.

(By He Jianwei)



Legendary architect, womanizer brought to life

By Charles Zhu

Women have fascinated writers for millennia. Some are described as angels and gentle beauties and others as the destroyers of life and scourge of the people.

Following in that tradition, T. C. Boyle wrote *The Women* (451pp, Viking, US \$27.95), a fiction based on the real life of one of America's premiere architects Frank Lloyd Wright and his turbulent and drama-packed relationships with four women. Boyle made a name for himself on the American literary scene with his books about the eccentric inventor of corn flakes John Harvey Kellogg in *The Road to Wellville* and sexologist Alfred C. Kinsey in *The Inner Circle*.

Wright, the star of this story, was one of the last cen-

tury's greater architects. His achievements include the Guggenheim Museum and the Imperial Hotel in Tokyo. He was bent on putting architectural structures over waterfalls, on steep slopes or on the dry bed of a stream. He was proud of designing a hotel that withstood an earthquake of catastrophic magnitude. He was crazy in his pursuit of success, both in his career and with the fairer sex. He regarded himself as a demigod.

His Japanese apprentice Sato Tadashi narrates this complex tale of Wright's escapades in reverse chronological order. Sato explains: "I was a cog in his machine for a certain period, one of many cogs that are nothing more." Boyle, on the strength of Tadashi's remembrances, portrays with



eloquent and fluent prose the architect as a devout, self-centered man and a cult-like figure.

Interestingly enough, Boyle lives in the George C. Stewart house, one of Wright's early

California designs. He skillfully recounted Wright's life, as narrated through the experiences of the four women who loved the architect.

His life pushed the boundaries of social, moral and romantic conventions. Boyle portrays the arrogant and bossy Wright as "a Wagnerian hero," "a guiding light and enduring genius of all working architects, past, present and future." His fate was fatally and irreversibly tied to the emotions of his imposing mother; his first devoted wife Catherine; the Montenegrin beauty Olgivanna Milanoff; the impulsive Southern belle Maud Miriam Noel; and the active Mamah Cheney.

Mamah was the artistic wife of one of Wright's clients, and he tried to run away with her.

However, Wright lost her when she, with a dozen others, was killed by a mad servant who set fire to Taliesin in Wisconsin: a home Wright built for her.

Olgivanna, a dancer of superb elegance and gentleness, worked hard to bring a happy and stable home life to Wright in the peak of his career. By contrast, Miriam was addicted to morphine and mentally unstable. The woman who called Wright "Lord of my Waking Dreams" later immensely vexed Wright with lawsuits and public accusations.

In the novel, Boyle exaggerates the womanizer's life with passionate antics. He is a novelist first, though in this tale he plays a faithful historian who accurately captures Wright's drama-packed romances and ties them to historical fact.

Life as a 28-year-old hermit crab



"The media always talks about social problems in China. The root of it all seems to be interpersonal relations, so I decided to enter strangers' homes to observe what the real problem is."

By He Jianwei

Wen Jie, 28, started a project called "Inquiline Plan" in February. He will live for a year in other people's homes to learn how they interact with each other. His hosts are all volunteers he met on the Internet.

Two months into the project, he has lived with 10 families. He stays with each from a day to a week, and records the stay in notes and photos. "I want to tell them (my hosts) communication is important, and most problems start from a small misunderstanding," he said.

Wen carried only a couple bags with his clothes and a small notebook computer. Tuesday night, he boarded the train to Nanjing to stay with his 11th family.

He graduated from Central South University in Hunan Province in 2004, and found work at a software company in Zhuhai, Guangdong Province. But ordinary life was too boring, and Wen turned to photography.

A photo session by the beach one day introduced him to the world of the hermit crab, a small crab that lives in the shells of other animals, switching homes into larger shells as it grows.

"Why was I staying in one place for my whole life? I realized I could live here for a while, and then move somewhere else," he said.

Wen quit his job and came to Beijing last year to live in a gallery.

His first project was called Finding 28 People, an experiment to learn about human relations between Chinese people. He posted an ad on a Web site asking 28 people to transfer 100 yuan to his account, and after several days, he made another post that asked 28 people to tell him their account numbers so he could send them 100 yuan.

Only one person gave him 100 yuan, while seven told him their account numbers. He selected one account at random and passed on the 100 yuan.

"The media always talks

about social problems in China. The root of it all seems to be interpersonal relations, so I decided to enter strangers' homes to observe what the real problem is," he said.

He posted his idea on his blog and other Web sites. At first, people suspected he was a swindler looking for a free flat. "I'm not surprised at all. I chatted with them on IMs (instant messages) and finally a person agreed to let me stay on February 15," he said.

Thus far, Wen has stayed with eight families in Beijing and two in Qingdao. He pays the traveling fees and they provide a free room. He lives with his hosts, talks with them, eats with them and shops with them.

The duration of each stay cannot be predicted. "I usually finish my stay either because the homeowner has to leave on business or because we get sick of each other," he said.

The changes and conflicts of each household are what keep his stays interesting. "You can't predict what will happen when you live in a stranger's house. It's their life," he said.

When he stayed in Qingdao with a young couple, Wen was the mediator in settling some of their disputes. "When they have conflicts, both the boyfriend and the girlfriend talk with me and complain about each other. Maybe an outsider can approach it with fresh eyes to find the real problem," he said.

At another home in Qingdao, he bridged the gap between two generations. The

parents had a 20-year-old son who quit school: not because of poor scores, but to become a poet.

The parents told Wen their worries, and he tried to explain how that generation thinks differently. He also talked with the son to clarify what kind of future he was setting himself up for.

The son reformulated his plans, and together with his friends is planning to go abroad. "As a child, we usually don't like to talk with our parents. But communicating makes it easier for us to understand each other," he said.

He said each of the 10 families he lived with had its own story, but all of them face the

same problems.

He advised aspiring sojourners that "you must be prepared for everything what will happen during your stay, do it yourself and don't try to change yourself to fit in, in their house."

And women looking to try it "must know how to protect themselves," he said.



Photo provided by Wen Jie

CFP Photo

Weekend shopping in Tianjin

By Annie Wei and Wu Li

With the warmer weather and the high-speed railway linking Beijing to Tianjin, shoppers looking for a change of scenery can head to the port city for a weekend of leisure. Apart from historical buildings and Goubuli Baozi restaurants, small specialty stores can be found all over Tianjin. These are similar to the gift shops that line Houhai – minus the exorbitant prices.

Below are four shops in Tianjin that are known locally for their distinct yet reasonably priced products.



A pair of fish-shaped stools (129 yuan each)

Living in style

Wanmei Shenghuo is known in Tianjin for its varied collection of household products. Credit goes to its owner Wei Li, a former career woman in the financial industry who picks up new merchandise on her travels.



Iron-made toys (15 to 300 yuan)

The shop has many Chinese folk culture-inspired items, in bright colors like red and green. A *Beijing Today* reporter's favorite was a pair of stools in the shape of a fish (129 yuan), a very Chinese image. Wanmei also has a huge collection of iron tools popular from the 1950s to the 1980s (15 to 300 yuan).

Wei spends a lot of time and energy running the store. "Many people who shop here think of it as a woman's home, and they say it reflects such," she said.

Wanmei Shenghuo

Where: 29 Floor 1, Wenhua Guangchang, Balitai, Nankai

District, Tianjin

Open: 10 am – 9 pm

Tel: 022 – 2711 9900

Cost: 10 to several hundred yuan

Clothing transformed into other things

Caisangzi's look reflects its owner Wang Yuan's passions: comfort, free time and poetry. In fact, the shop is named after a style of ancient Chinese poetry. But Wang's obsession is unmistakably clothes.

"I love clothes. Different types of clothing show different types of beauty through their prints and texture," Wang said. "My suitcases and wardrobes are packed with different kinds of clothes."

Over time, where to keep her enormous fashion collection became a problem. Then she hit on the idea of transforming the clothes into other

useful articles. She started making designs, sifted through the materials she had and talked to tailors who could help implement her plans.

Some of Wang's collection will remain hers. "I do not want to sell it at a low price, but I also do not want to overcharge customers for such a thing," she said.



Caisangzi

Where: B66 Xinwenhua Guangchang, Balitai, Nankai District, Tianjin

Open: 10 am – 9 pm

Tel: 022 – 2333 1761

Cost: 15 to several hundred yuan



The owner's designs like bags (190 yuan, left) and cell phone covers (15 yuan, right) have become the store's most popular products.

Notebooks with a personal mark

Many people are willing to spend 30 yuan for a notebook with an attractive cover, neat lines and quality paper.

Zhao Rong never planned to open a store. He adored notebooks, so he decided to design them and consign them to local shops. But one day, he got a call from a friend, who offered him a small commercial space for rent. The proposal sounded good, so he took it.

The eight-square-meter space could only accommodate three to five customers, but its tiny size also made passersby wonder what business it did. People began streaming in regularly, and now Yinji or Forever Mark has found its niche in the stationery business.

"Although people nowadays do not like

writing on paper, they still like to collect notebooks," Zhao said. His brand is known for its original design diaries, calendars, albums, postcards and pads made from quality recycled paper.

Zhao's store sells imported stationery items like Pinkfoot and Ooh lala from South Korea, Muji from Japan and PaperBlank from Ireland.

"Notebooks are becoming more like fashion clothing," Zhao said. Many foreign brands come out with new products or themes every few months, just like fashion houses do each new season.

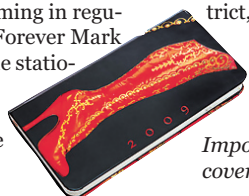
Yinji

Where: A19 Floor 1, Xinwenhua Guangchang, Bailitai, Nankai District, Tianjin

Open: 10 am – 9 pm

Tel: 022 – 2712 7023

Cost: from 20 yuan up



Imported notebook with luxury cover costs hundreds



Many items in the store are one-of-a-kind, like the necklace (left) and the boots (right).

Ancient, ethnic and international

Bamu Wenhua, which is situated beside the popular Cantonese restaurant Yueweixian, never ceases to amaze first-time visitors. It has ethnic Chinese decor and a display of 8,000 antique pieces. "India" is the store's current theme.

It is an ideal place to find quirky items, some of which were brought back by owner Xiao Mi during his travels. Its

clothes are made from natural fibers like cotton and linen.

Bamu Wenhua

Where: 333 Hebei Lu, Heping District, Tianjin

Open: 10 am – 10 pm

Tel: 022 – 2331 4455

Cost: 10 to several hundred yuan

Photos by Zhou Pu

Spice attack on the taste buds

By Wang Yu

Shuizhuyu, a Sichuan fish dish, is practically Beijing's own, considering how it has become a staple of birthday parties, family celebrations and office gatherings. But kaoyu, or roast fish, has been gaining fame among locals in the past year, with restaurants of the kind sprouting all around town.

Kaoyu, which originates in Chongqing, is broiled fish with a spicy-salty flavor. It is also packed with calories, so people who are trying to lose weight better steer clear.

According to legend, the dish was invented by Zhuge Liang, one of the top politicians and strategists during the Three Kingdoms period 1,700 years ago.

The fish meat is sliced off the bone, salted, then roasted in chilies, honey and soy sauce. Afterwards, the meat is transferred to an oil-filled dish with a burner underneath to keep it warm. Imagine it as a cross between a traditional roast and Sichuan hotpot.



Shuicai's garden and water fountain

Just like home

First-time diners at Shuicai will have to sweat for their meal. It is not easy to find, hidden in a *hutong* behind the Xidan Mingzhu building in Xidan's shopping district.

The restaurant, housed in an old bungalow, looks more like someone's home. There are plants all around, a small water fountain, some antique furniture, modern sofas and various little toys. The lighting creates a very relaxing atmosphere. The best seats in the house are the sofas placed beside the windows, which feel like sitting on a couch at a bar.

Kaoyu usually uses grass carp, snakehead or catfish. But Shuicai's kitchen only works with grass carps, which weigh around 1.5 kilograms each. The dish is available in the usual flavors hot and spicy, lobster sauce and pickled pepper.

The joy of dining at Shuicai is the large servings of steamed vegetables that come with the roast fish. *Beijing Today* recommends asparagus, lettuce, tofu sticks and lotus root.

Kaoyu usually takes at least half an hour to cook, so the restaurant gives diners free salted sunflower seeds while they wait. Ordering an appetizer is also a good idea.

Shuicai's roast fish is not very oily compared to those of other restaurants. To refresh burning taste buds, the restaurant offers agaric wasabi, a cold dish made from fresh black fungus with soy and wasabi sauce. After dinner, customers and their friends can have their picture taken and tacked on the restaurant's wall, just like family.

Shuicai Roast Fish

Where: 9 Dachenggou Hutong, Xicheng District
Open: 11:30 am – 2:30 pm for lunch; 6-10 pm for dinner
Cost: 50 per person
Tel: 6601 5727



Photos provided by Shuicai

Other choices

Wushan Roast Fish

Where: 7 North of Yujing Building, 41 Xueqing Lu, Haidian District
Tel: 8717 8666

Fish Bar

Where: Building 2, Anyuan Dong Li, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6492 6150

Zhuyufang

Where: 53 Beijige Santiao, Dongdan, Dongcheng District
Tel: 6522 2335



A serving of kaoyu



Zifeiyu is hidden in a quiet neighborhood.

Photos by Liu Bo



Inside the restaurant

Chic Chinese

The restaurant's name comes from a classic work by Zhuangzi, one of the most important Chinese philosophers. Zhuangzi's original line goes, "As you are not a fish, how can you

know the joy and happiness of being one of them?" Well, we may not know the feeling of being a fish, but we definitely know how they taste.

Zifeiyu is another "house" hidden in a residential community, at Hepingli. It has modern architecture, and its glass entrance and white walls actually make it look more like an art gallery.

In a sense, it is an art gallery. There is always an exhibition of photographs taken by owner Yang Xiaowei and his friends. And we have to say these guys know a thing or two about the craft. Zifeiyu also has shelves of books – pretty rare for Chinese restaurants in town – and its menu is on a foldable fan. The ambiance and decor leave an impression on first-time customers.

Yang recommends hot and spicy kaoyu. The one in lobster sauce flavor does not taste as strong or salty as in other restaurants. As for cold dishes, try the preserved egg with ginger juice (12 yuan). Do not miss out on its home-made plum juice (12 yuan); we just wish the staff kept it in the refrigerator longer.

Zifeiyu

Where: Building 2, Area 14, Hepingli, Chaoyang District
Open: 11:30 am – 2:30 pm for lunch; 6-10 pm for dinner
Cost: 50 per person
Tel: 6428 9626

Roasted fish and more

Even with two floors, this restaurant is not very big, but diners should have no trouble spotting its signboard.

Besides the usual kaoyu sauces, Longmen offers the dish flavored with pickled vegetable, sour pickle and pickled olives. For double happiness, customers can ask the kitchen to prepare the fish in two flavors.

Compared with the two other roast fish restaurants we visited, Longmen has the most variety of snacks and cold dishes. One of its most popular is long erge brinjal (12 yuan), which consists of fresh vegetables in various seasonings.

Longmen's owner also runs Ximen Roasted Chicken Wings, a reputable restaurant in town, so it is no wonder the chicken wings here taste as good as the roast fish. People who do not mind loads of calories should try the grilled chicken skin (2 yuan) and the spicy Kim Heung-pot (58 yuan). The only thing is, the restaurant offers so many kinds of food they no longer seem to have a specialty.

Longmen Roast Fish

Where: 314 Dongsi Beidajie, Dongcheng District
Open: 11:30 am – 2:30 pm for lunch; 6-10 pm for dinner
Cost: 50 per person
Tel: 6405 3806



Spicy eggplant

Photos provided by Longmen

By Venus Lee

The rate of breast cancer in China is four to five times lower than in more developed countries, though it has grown in the past few decades in the most affluent cities.

Current findings suggest the traditional diet, one rich in mushrooms and green tea, may explain the country's lower incidence of breast cancer, said Zhang Min, lead researcher at the University of Western Australia, Perth.

Preventing breast cancer through diet

Fresh mushrooms cut cancer risk

A survey of 2,000 Chinese women found that those who ate 10 or more grams of fresh mushrooms daily had one-third the chance of developing breast cancer compared to the control group: those who ate 4 or more grams of dried mushrooms had half the cancer risk.

Mushroom eaters who also drank green tea saw their breast cancer rates drop to between one-tenth and one-fifth.

The study was carried out by researchers from the University of Western Australia and Zhejiang University and was published in the International Journal of Cancer. The women's dietary intake was assessed using a standard food frequency questionnaire (FFQ), which asked questions about 100 food items, including fresh and dry mushrooms, and green tea.

The women ate mainly fresh, white button mushrooms and shitake mushrooms.

The research found that mushroom extracts inhibited the activity of the aromatase protein in breast cancer cells grown in the laboratory, which works similarly to the breast cancer drugs known as aromatase inhibitors. It can stimulate the immune system's cancer defenses.

Cancer-fighting foods

Zhou Qinglu, a nutritionist at Beijing Sports Science Research, said a third of all cancers are caused by diet.

Beside mushrooms and tea, there are several other health foods that can lower breast cancer risk:

Soy:

To be more specific, a plant chemical called genistein, an isoflavone found in soy, has displayed cancer-fighting activity in lab tests involving cancers of the prostate, breast and colon.

Soy offers a protective effect against breast cancer. The phytoestrogens in soy foods are anti-estrogens. "In other words, they may block estrogen from reaching the receptors – therefore potentially protecting women from developing breast cancer. Pre-menopausal women can benefit from eating soy foods as their natural estrogen levels are high," Zhou said.

However, this may not be true in post-menopausal women. She said studies found that soy could become "pro-estrogen" in women with low levels of natural estrogen. In other words, concentrated soy

supplements may add estrogen to the body and increase breast cancer risk in these women.

Lycopene-rich produce:

Lycopene, a powerful antioxidant, is found in tomatoes, red grapefruit, watermelon, apricots and guava. Studies found that lycopene can help reduce breast cancer and heart disease. Lycopene is better absorbed by the body when tomatoes are processed, because lycopene is bound to the tomato's cell structure.

Beta-carotene-rich produce:

Fruit and vegetable consumption helps prevent cancer. Beta-carotene can be found in spinach, winter squash, carrots, sweet potatoes, kale and cantaloupe, and lycopene and lutein are found in dark green leafy vegetables like spinach, romaine, collard greens, broccoli and Swiss chard.

"Fruits and vegetables are loaded with antioxidants, fiber, foliate and potassium and they are low in fat and calories. In addition to their role in cancer protection, studies showed that they also help prevent stroke and heart disease," Zhou said.

Whole grains:

Zhou said most people know that fruits and vegetables contain beneficial phytochemicals and antioxidants, but many do not realize that whole grains are often an even better source of these key nutrients. In fact, whole grains are a good source of vitamins B and E, magnesium, iron and fiber, as well as other valuable antioxidants not found in some fruits and vegetables. Most antioxidants and vitamins are found in the germ and the bran of a grain.

Whole grains have been shown to reduce the risk of heart disease by decreasing cholesterol levels, blood pressure and blood coagulation. They have also been found to reduce the risks of many other types of cancer. "Serving a variety of whole grains such as brown rice, bulgur and wheat berries can maximize intake of fiber, which can also fight breast cancer by lowering levels of estrogen in the body," Zhou said.

Flaxseed:

Flax has a high content of alpha linolenic acids, a type of plant-derived omega 3 fatty acid,

similar to those found in fish. Studies have found it can lower cholesterol levels, blood triglycerides and blood pressure.

Aside from alpha linolenic acid, flax seed is rich in lignan. Lignan is a type phytoestrogen (antioxidant) and also provides fiber. "The current researches reveal that lignan in flax seed shows a lot of promise in fighting breast cancer. The lignan metabolites can bind to estrogen receptors to inhibit the onset of estrogen-stimulated breast cancer," Zhou said.

Prevention still key

"There is no effective cure for breast cancer at present, so prevention is still very important," said Li Peiwen, director of the oncology department in China-Japan Friendship Hospital. "We have to cut off the way breast cancer cells generate by nurturing healthy habits."

1. Obesity a risk

High-fat foods stimulate breast cancer because the body generates a lot of estrogens and prostaglandins, which accelerate tumor growth. Excessive fat intake also causes obesity and weakens the immune system.

"Women who are obese

when menopause begins are more likely to develop breast cancer. The increase in cancer in obese women may be due to changes in hormone levels," he said. After menopause, the hormone oestrogen changes into its active form in body fat. Obese postmenopausal women can have higher oestrogen levels and thus a higher risk of breast cancer.

2. Alcohol, smoking and caffeine

"We know that alcohol is linked to breast cancer risk. It isn't a big factor for most of us, but it is definitely there. Compared to women who

seldom drink, the prevalence of breast cancer is as high as 45 percent among those who drink frequently," Li said. Alcohol can stimulate the secretion of prolactin in the anterior pituitary gland, which is closely connected with breast cancer.

One enzyme in the body can break down carcinogens in tobacco, but enzymatic activity in some women's bodies is very low, so smoking will magnify their breast cancer risk.

Coffee, cocoa and chocolate are also no-nos for cancer prevention. These are all rich in xanthine, which

causes the development of benign breast tumors. Menopausal women need to curb their cocoa cravings.

3. Moderate exercise

In all walks of life, athletes have the least incidence of breast cancer. Heavy exercise burns fat and keeps estrogen levels low. "Moderate exercise can reduce estrogen and reduce a women's frequency of ovulation. They can also decrease body fat and increase immunity," Li said.

Regular physical exams are an important step in early detection of both cancer and its risks.

Signs and symptoms

The most common sign of breast cancer is a lump that feels different from its surrounding breast tissue. "More than 80 percent of breast cancer cases are discovered when the woman feels a lump," said Wang Tianfeng, director of the Breast Cancer Prevention and Treatment Center at Beijing Tumor Hospital.

The first medical sign, or objective indication of breast cancer as detected by a physician, is discovered by a mammogram. Lumps found in lymph nodes in the armpits and collarbone can also indicate breast cancer.

He said indications of breast cancer other than a lump may include changes in breast size or shape, skin dimpling, nipple inversion, or spontaneous single-nipple discharge. Pain is an unreliable tool in determining the presence or absence of breast cancer, but may be indicative of other breast health issues such as mastodynia. **CFP Photo**



Early summer on horseback

By Zhang Dongya

Spring is quickly giving way to early summer. Once frozen grasslands are again green, but the sun is still gentle enough to bask in the outdoors – the perfect time for horseback riding.

Beijing has many places for horseback riding, both grasslands and indoor equestrian centers. Below are three places where you can enjoy this increasingly popular activity.

On the west side of Badaling Great Wall are two adjacent grasslands, Kangxi and Jingxi. They originally were part of a big pasture; over time, Jingxi became a part of Hebei Province. The two ranches offer horseback riding, but with varied services and prices.

All-round professional service

The Kangxi Grasslands, under the management of a tourism development company, have turned into a tourist area. Its staff members are trained to handle huge groups.

Besides horseback riding, it holds ethnic song and dance performances and an annual kite festival. Admission to the grasslands is 30 yuan, which covers the performances and a visit to the Kangxi Relics Exhibition.

A ride on a “regular” horse costs 100 yuan per hour, while a thoroughbred will set you back 180 yuan. Trainers can help riders choose a horse, and stay with newcomers during the ride.

The ranch also has horse-drawn carriages, which can take four people at a time for 100 yuan an hour.

Near the grasslands is a bird reserve called Yeyahu, or Wild Duck Lake, where people can go birdwatching. Admission to the reserve is 50 yuan. Visitors can rent a rowboat or speedboat for a ride around the lake. Riders from Kangxi, accompanied by a trainer, can take their mounts by the water to enjoy the beautiful scenery.

Meals are available at the ranch for 30 yuan per person. Diners have a choice of farmhouse or Mongolian flavor.

Kangxi is also an ideal place for camping. It rents out Mongolian yurts, which can fit five people, for 200 yuan a night. Regular tents are 100 yuan for two persons and 150 yuan for three.

The cost of most products and services within the ranch is negotiable, especially for those who belong to a tour group.

Getting there: Take bus 27, 55, 305, 315, 380, 409, 625 or 635 to Deshengmen, then transfer to Bus 919 to Badaling Great Wall.

Tel: 6913 1601

Wild, open and easy on the pocket

If you want an affordable horseback riding experience in the open, then Jingxi Grasslands is the best choice.

Jingxi, just 20 minutes by car from Kangxi and roughly the same size, is managed by local residents and farmers who are warm and hospitable. Visitors will have a good choice of horses in a wilder atmosphere. Some people keep their horses there and visit for weekend rides.

The prices at Jingxi are only half that at the Kangxi Grasslands. There is no admission fee, but gate guards expect a “donation.” Visitors normally give 5 to 10 yuan, depending on the size of their vehicle. Horseback rides cost 30 yuan per hour.

The horsemen were practically born on the saddle and new riders will feel safe under their guidance. With a trainer’s help, even first-timers can gallop on horseback after just an hour on their mount.

Jingxi has a special route for riders that ends at the Guanting Reservoir. There, visitors can rent a speedboat for six or seven people at 240 yuan per hour. A bigger boat that can seat 10 costs 300 an hour.

Those who want to pass on the boat ride can catch their breath at the reservoir before heading back to the ranch. The ride back seems to go faster, since the horses look forward to going home. They run at such a speed you might have to hold them back based on your comfort level.

Continued on page 21...



Jingxi Grasslands, in Hebei Province, has a wilder atmosphere.

Photos provided by Jingxi Grasslands



Kangxi Grasslands is the best horseback riding venue that is nearest downtown Beijing.

CFP Photos

... continued from page 20



1.



2.



3.



4.

1. Riding a horse at an indoor equestrian center can make you feel like a professional rider.
2. Sunshine Valley Equestrian Club hosts international horse riding competitions.
3. Visitors can watch professional equestrian teams train at Sunshine Valley, the country's biggest indoor equestrian center.
4. The Horse Culture Museum inside the club showcases horse sculptures, horse handicrafts and outfits for horses.

The ranch draws different types of people. There are the riders with complete equestrian equipment and apparel. There are also those who merely don a straw hat and use branches to whip a horse.

Popular among visitors is a kind of converted go-kart. The cars are shabby and rickety, but that is the thrilling part – the feeling that the ride will break into pieces on the rugged terrain. The go-karts, which can sit two people, cost 150 yuan per hour.

If riders get stuck with their go-kart in a puddle or in a ditch, there is no need to panic. Just call the number printed inside the car and the owner will ride out to save them.

Meals at Jingxi feels like being in the Wild West. For dinner, a farmer may slaughter his range chicken to make visitors a delicious soup. Make sure orders are made at the beginning of the day, so there will be enough time to prepare the meal.

Getting there: Take Bus 919 at Deshengmen to Badaling Great Wall, then take a taxi (about 20 yuan) to Jingxi Caoyuan (Jingxi Grasslands).

Tel: 6913 1601

Equestrian club and training center

Riding a horse at an indoor equestrian center can make you feel like a professional rider.

Sunshine Valley, located at the foot of Badaling Great Wall, is one of the first clubs in town to provide modern facilities. Its location is where people in ancient times kept their horses; some mud walls from centuries ago still remain.

The center, built in 2000 to meet the requirements of professional equestrian training, now serves as the base of the National Equestrian Team. But it is also open to the public.

With a capacity of 2,000 people, it is the country's biggest indoor equestrian center. It has three outdoor training venues and is home to hundreds of locally and internationally bred horses. Visitors who catch professional equestrian teams at

the venue can watch them train.

Sunshine Valley has auxiliary facilities, such as a four-star hotel and restaurant, an indoor tennis hall and a clubhouse with various recreational activities.

The club welcomes new members who can use the club's facilities for 1,500 yuan for 10 hours. For non-members, a horse ride costs 120 yuan per hour; 180 yuan for a good breed. A trainer costs an extra 80 yuan per hour.

The club organizes regular rides to the foot of the Badaling Great Wall. Two trainers and one doctor accompany participants on the trip. They will bring horses back to the center so that participants can climb the Great Wall. The package costs 880 yuan.

Group tours to Sunshine Valley get the best deal: 40 percent off the regular ticket price. The club can also extend a 40-percent discount to people who would like to visit adjacent sites such as the Yanhuang Memorial, the Badaling Wildlife Park and the Horse Culture Museum of China.

The museum, located inside the center, is very popular among horse enthusiasts. It has six exhibition halls, which introduce the history of horse-raising in China, and the horse culture in Britain, the US and Mongolia. It has nearly 2,000 pieces of art about horses on display.

Among the paintings are masterpieces on horses created by Chinese and foreign painters. There is also a regular exhibition on horse lovers' unique collections, such as the horse sculptures, horse handicrafts, daily articles for horses, horse stamps, horse-shaped wine cups and horse match-box pictures.

Admission to the museum is 30 yuan. For more information, call 8118 2354.

Where: 8 Yangguang Lu, Badaling, Yanqing County

Getting there: Take Bus 919 at Deshengmen to Xibazi, then take a taxi (about 10 yuan) to the Sunshine Valley Equestrian Club.

Tel: 8118 2890



Sunshine Valley organizes regular rides to the foot of the Badaling Great Wall.
Photos provided by Sunshine Valley

5 steps to keeping customers happy

Handling complaints and driving your organization to success

By Maggie Nee

A dissatisfied customer is a potential disaster. Not only may the company lose that customer's business, but its reputation may be damaged by negative word of mouth.

Take heart! According to the International Customer Service Association (ISCA), 95 percent of dissatisfied customers would do business with a company again if their problem was solved quickly and satisfactorily. This means we still have a chance to save the relationship and an ideal opportunity to brush up on our complaint-handling skills.

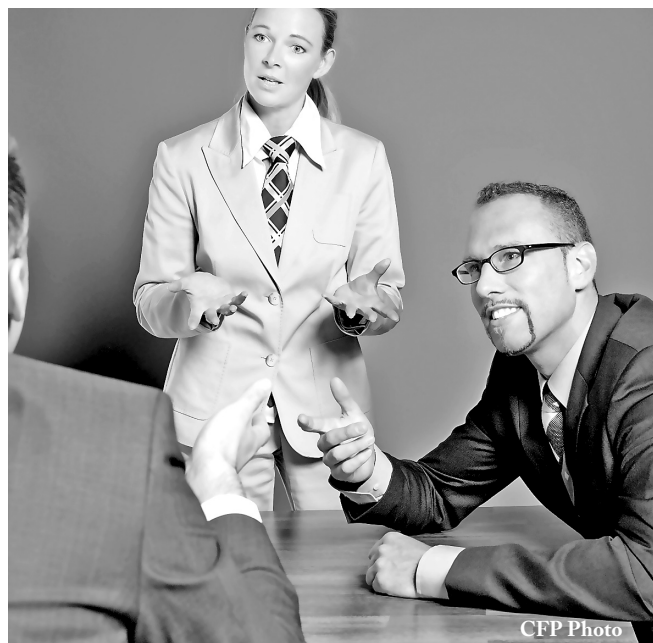
When you are challenged by a customer, it is very easy to become defensive. That is a temptation you must resist: instead, take a moment to "put yourself in their shoes."

This idea of an "empathy engine," as defined by Katzenbach Partners, should work like a human heart. However, instead of pumping blood around the body, it pumps information and values around the company to ensure employees of all levels – from CEO down to the front lines – can harness empathy to understand the needs of their customers.

Once you have achieved the right frame of mind to deal with a complaint, you can follow this five-step process to resolve the situation.

Step 1: Ask open questions

The first thing that a customer needs is to feel that his or her complaint is important to



CFP Photo



you. If you try to hide from the customer or immediately pass the complaint to a superior, the customer will lose confidence in your company and feel unappreciated. It is far better to approach the customer and allow the person to fully explain his or her grievance.

There are two benefits to this approach: first, the customer will enjoy getting the complaint off his or her chest, and second, you

may discover valuable information, which you can use to solve the problem.

Ask open questions. Do not interrupt the client and do not argue with any of their points.

Step 2: Show your understanding

By actively listening, you show them that you understand the problem and you are willing to address their concerns. This means maintain-

ing eye contact, nodding your head and making sounds of agreement. You can reinforce this message by saying, "Yes, I understand," or "I can see why you would be upset." It may also be a good idea to offer customers a seat and a drink – this moves them from a defensive stance into a position where you attend their needs.

Step 3: Offer at least two solutions

Complaints are often driven by a feeling of having lost control. Therefore, you must offer the customer at least two possible solutions to the problem and allow the person to choose the solution. By letting the customer pick the solution, you are restoring his or her power. This also gives you an opportunity to be creative in your problem solving.

If your client has complained about a faulty product, you have several choices: you can offer to replace the product, refund the cost of the product or even offer the customer a similar or higher grade product at a special discounted price.

Step 4: Confirm solution

This is an often overlooked step in handling complaints. All too often, people assume they know what the customer wants and follow a course of action which does not fully satisfy. People often assume that a discount will appease any com-

plaint, but this is not always the case. Sometimes customers are more concerned about speed or quality than they are with cost.

Step 5: Follow-up

Follow-up either verbally or in writing to ensure that the customer is satisfied. A formal letter of apology is a great step to let your customer know that his or her feedback is important to you and that action has been taken to resolve the problems they faced.

As an HR professional, you must be able to deal with internal customers – colleagues who require your help and services. Second, by ensuring that employees – across your organization – are well trained in handling complaints, you will guarantee that any complaints will lead not to lost customers.

And, what happened to our disgruntled customer? Thankfully, by empathizing and by following the five steps outlined above, we ensured that he or she is no longer disgruntled.

Maggie Nee is ClarkMorgan's Regional Sales Manager



Dining

Mother's Day Sunday Brunch



Bring mom to CBD Mother's Day Sunday Brunch and show her how much you care about her. All mothers are entitled to 50 percent off.

Where: CBD International Cuisine, Grand Millennium Beijing, 7 Dongsanhuan Zhong Lu, Chaoyang District
When: May 10
Cost: 248 yuan (non-alcoholic drinks), 328 yuan (Mumm Champagne, wines and welcome cocktails)
Tel: 6530 9383

Huaiyang Food Promotion

Delight in the not-too-spicy, not-too-bland taste of Huaiyang cuisine and witness how it is meticulously prepared. Try an array of authentic Huaiyang

dishes prepared by a team of Yangzhou chefs.

Where: 21st Floor Restaurant, The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel, 10 Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District
When: May 1-31
Tel: 6590 5566 ext. 2295

Happy Mother's Day



Show your mother how much you appreciate her by celebrating the day with a Magnifique Mother's Day Sunday Brunch. An exquisite gift will make her feel even more special.

Where: VIC restaurant, Tower C, Wanda Plaza, 93 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang District
When: May 10
Cost: 288 yuan (unlimited free fresh juice, wine, local beer and soft drinks); 378 yuan (free Veuve Clicquot Ponsardia Champagne)
Tel: 8599 6666

Aperitivo Brunch

Enjoy all you can eat Tapas from Chef Jordi's tantalizing Aperitivo Brunch menu. Tapas, small Spanish dishes, are the in-thing throughout Europe and are

a great way to enjoy various dishes in a casual dining environment.

Where: Agua, 23 Qianmen Dong Dajie, Dongcheng District
When: 11 am – 3 pm (every Sunday)
Cost: 198 yuan per person; kids under six eat free
Tel: 6559 6266

Buy three get one free



An amazing promotion is available for the dinner buffet. Pay for two seats and get the third free for each party of three people. The fabulous buffet includes Chinese, Japanese and Western cuisine. Well-prepared representative Japanese delicacies, such as roasted eel, sashimi, tempura and sushi are available daily at the buffet festival. Unlimited free beverages include soft drinks and sake.

Where: Orchid Terrace, Hotel New Otani Changfugong, 26 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District
When: May 1 – June 30
Cost: 158 yuan for lunch, 298 yuan for dinner (368 yuan on Fridays)
Tel: 5877 5561

Aviation

Israel Tourism Opens China Office

Israel has opened its new China office for tourism and appointed Wang Yuzhi its chief representative. Israel Tourism, the new office, will gear its promotions to big cities like Beijing, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Hong Kong. Tours will focus on showing

a different Israel, through its culture and natural landscapes.

Home of the world-famous religious city Jerusalem and unique nature landscapes like the Dead Sea, the Red Sea, the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Galilee, Israel is an excellent destination for the tourists seeking culture and natural scenery.

Tourism

Paddington Bear

Paddington Bear has packed his bags and he's heading out of Heathrow. Children can travel with him, or at least his suitcase, on board British Airways' longhaul flights. The new activity bags, known as Skyflyer packs, have been designed to look like Paddington's famous and well-traveled

suitcase. They will be available for children between the ages of three and five.



Hotel

Heavenly Spa by Westin

The Heavenly Spa by Westin at The Westin Beijing Financial Street has been recognized by Asia Spa & Wellness Festival 2009 Gold Awards as the Best Hotel Spa in China.

The Asia Spa & Wellness Festival 2009 Gold Awards celebrates the pioneering spirit of Asian spas and wellness centers. It is the region's most prestigious awards recognizing outstanding and innovative achievements and extraordinary acts by spas, wellness centers and resorts.

(By Sun Feng)

Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Wang Yu at wangyu2008@ynet.com.

What is the color of your money?



By Zheng Lu

About six years ago, when I was still in high school, a classmate and I decided to join the school's annual bazaar. Classmate and good friend Wang Hua and I set up our booths side-by-side.

Wang had just come back from a summer exchange program in Britain. He said that after a month there, he not only better understood British culture, but also vastly improved his English language skills. I believed he was bragging, because a month was just too short a period to make big progress in a foreign language. I smiled and nodded as he shared his experiences abroad, but I definitely wanted to test him given the chance.

It did not take long for the opportunity to come – with unexpected results.

At the bazaar, Wang sold his old electronic equipment. Meanwhile I wanted to do away with old tapes of pop music and some stationery

sets for 1 yuan each. Female students constantly stopped by my booth, and in 20 minutes, I earned more than 20 yuan.

Wang had not sold anything. I was pleased with myself and told Wang he should have brought more affordable items. He merely smiled and said he would continue to wait for customers.

Soon after my sales reached 50 yuan, Wang's first customer turned up. He was a teacher from the US named Hollins, who had also become a friend to many students, including Wang.

Hollins picked up a DVD player from Wang's booth and closely looked at it. "Hmm, this is something I can use. How much for this?" Hollins said.

"That one is 300 yuan. Let me see the color of your money first," Wang said with grin.

Hollins only laughed. I felt embarrassed for him and got angry at Wang. "What are you trying to do? Why are you embarrassing him? You know Hol-

lins has been here for many years. Of course he won't give you US dollars but Chinese notes," I said. "It will surely be red for a 100-yuan note, and even if he pays you green bucks, you can exchange them at the bank."

The two of them froze. Wang stared at me for a while, first with a look of annoyance, then of mirth.

Hollins's voice broke the silence. "Lulu, you misunderstood him," he said. "Wang was joking with me. He used an idiomatic expression that meant he wanted to know whether I could afford to pay up or not."

"That's right! Actually, you were the one who embarrassed me," Wang said with a smile.

After Hollins left, the DVD player under his arm, Wang said he learned the line during his one month in Britain.

At that point, I was convinced he had really made a lot of progress in his English. And if I dared to admit it, he also helped improve mine.

Blacklist

This is a column of words or phrases commonly mis-used by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then watch out for this page each week.

Local professor: Zhu Shida

1. There is 30 minutes left.

This is related to basic English rules, so there should not even be such mistakes. But since even seasoned English writers occasionally commits such errors, beginners can be forgiven for the lapse. Obviously, the sentence should be, "There are 30 minutes left." In English, however, you do have subjects that are in plural form and yet take a single third person predicate. When talking about track and field events for instance, you can say, "One hundred meters is a sport he is extremely good at." Another example: "He is used to taking a long walk in the countryside every day; 25 kilometers is never a problem for him."

2. Environmentally friendly

This combination of words is composed of an adverb and an adjective. There are indeed such combinations in English; for instance, warmly worded, badly done, wonderfully written. Despite these cases, however, the phrase above should be written as "environment-friendly." Another such example is "ecology-friendly"; you will not say "ecologically friendly" though this grammatically is not wrong.

3. The coming of Spring's arrival

This is a typical case of redundancy and reflects thinking in Chinese. Once you say "coming," it is no longer necessary to say "arrival" in the same sentence, since they express the same meaning. Simply say, it is "the coming of spring," "spring arrives" or poetically, "the harbinger of spring." English language beginners are susceptible to making mistakes of redundancy. Simplicity is the first and foremost principle in writing.

Native speaker: Penny Turner

1. There is 30 minutes left

"There are 30 minutes left" is correct. In addition to Professor Zhu's note about plural subjects that take a singular verb, there are singular nouns that look deceptively plural. Here are some of them: measles, trousers, scissors, mumps, tweezers. More on numbers, fractions and percentages take the singular when they modify a mass noun and the plural when they modify a plural noun. For instance, "Three-fourths of the cake (mass noun) has already been sold." "Twenty percent of high school students (plural noun) skip class every month."

2. Environmentally friendly

The professor's argument against "environmentally friendly" makes sense, but the fact remains that it is the correct expression to mean "goods and services considered to inflict minimal or no harm on the environment." Related phrases are "eco-friendly" and "nature friendly." These are good words to remember in a world that is becoming more and more focused on environmental issues and climate change.

3. The coming of Spring's arrival

This phrase is definitely redundant. Aside from writing, "the coming of spring," you can fix it by saying, "spring's arrival." Like the professor said, simplicity in writing is highly prized. Chinese writing on the other hand, seems to esteem the repetition of thoughts within the same line. This is a cultural difference that Chinese learners of English need to overcome.

Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please send a picture of it to wangyu2008@ynet.com together with your name and address.

Welcome again

By Tiffany Tan

I was shopping on Wangfujing earlier in the week, on a mission to find a new R & B music CD. I got there late in the evening, so I was in a rush to cover as many shops as I could before the doors shut. I had never been inside Wangfujing Bookstore, but tried my luck there as I remembered that Xidan Bookstore had a good collection of foreign music.

I dashed to the store's fourth floor, its music section, quickly realized there



Photo by Tiffany Tan

was nothing there for me and ran back to the escalators. On the ride from the second to the first floor suddenly

loomed before me the huge sign, "Welcome to Wangfujing Bookstore again." I was amazed; I realized I did not see a welcome sign when I came in, so I thought the store put up another one at that spot to make sure they did not miss welcoming anyone.

It was not until I saw the Chinese words did I realize the sign meant, Please come and visit Wangfujing Bookstore again. The sign was not a hello but a good-bye after all.

The Curious Case of Benjamin Button

Movie of the week

The movie, adapted from F. Scott Fitzgerald's short story, is a totally different tale with new characters such as Button's (Brad Pitt) beloved Daisy (Cate Blanchett) and his foster mother Queenie. Fitzgerald was never one to sing the praises of love: the original novel was more toned down and satirical of Hollywood's favorite theme.

The screenplay was written by Eric Roth, writer of *Forest Gump*, and directed by David Fincher, who managed to balance the movie between being a New Orleans epic and a story of magical life. Pitt proves once again that he has more to offer than a pretty face.

Synopsis

Button is surely a curious case. When he is born in New Orleans just after World War I, he is already in his 80s, and he proceeds to live his life aging in reverse. The baby Benjamin was abandoned by his father, but adopted by Queenie, a black woman who cares for elderly people. As he grows up, Button becomes younger and goes on a long trip, on which he experiences pain and falls in love.

Scene 1

(The young Benjamin leaves home to sail the world with Captain Mike.)

Benjamin (B): Captain Mike had contracted for three years with Moran Brothers Tug and Salvage. The old ship had

been refitted with a diesel engine and a new sea winch. We went around Florida and up the Atlantic seaboard. We were a crew of seven now. Captain Mike and me, the cookie, Prentiss Mayes from Wilm-

ington, Delaware. The Brody twins, Rick and Vic who got along fine at sea, but for some reason, once they were on dry land, couldn't stand the sight of (1) each other. There was John Grimm, who sure fit his name

from Belvedere, South Dakoto.

John Grimm: One in every eight boats never returns ... all hands (2) lost at sea.

B: And Pleasant Curtis from Nashville, who never said a word to anyone ... except himself.



Scene 2

(The crew travels to the Soviet Union and stays in a hotel in Murmansk, where Benjamin meets his first love Elizabeth, the wife of a British spy.)

Benjamin's Narration

(N): Elizabeth and I would lose track of the night (3), till just before daybreak.

Elizabeth (E): I think I may have given you the wrong impression.

B: I beg your pardon?

E: Well, married women don't customarily sit around in

the middle of the night with strange men in hotels.

B: I wouldn't know what a married woman does and doesn't do.

(Another night in the hotel.)

E: Don't waste any time bothering about the wine or the cheese in Murmansk, cause they are really completely ordinary. But the caviar and the vodka are sublime and plentiful. So ... Savor it ... and don't eat it all at once. Because that way, there's nothing left

to enjoy. Now take a little swallow of vodka while it's still in your mouth. Nazdrovia ... You haven't been with many women, have you?

B: Not on Sundays.

E: And you've never had a girlfriend before, have you?

B: No ma'am.

E: When I was 19, I attempted to become the first woman ever to swim the English Channel.

B: Really?

E: But the current (4) that

day was so strong that ... for every stroke I took, I was pushed back two. I was in the water for 32 hours. And when I was two miles from Calais, it started to rain. When I couldn't go any further, I stopped. I just stopped. And everybody asked me would I try again. Why wouldn't I? I never did. As a matter of fact, I've never done anything with my life after that. Your hands are so coarse. I can feel the wind in your cheeks. I'm afraid it's the witching hour (5).

Scene 3

(After World War II, Benjamin goes home and meets Daisy, who has become the favorite dancer of George Balanchine, one of the 20th century's foremost choreographers and a pioneer of ballet in the US.)

Daisy (D): Did I tell you that I danced for Balanchine? He's a famous choreographer. He said that I had perfect line.

In a rehearsal once, a dancer fell. And he just put it right into the production. Can you imagine that in a classical ballet? A dancer intentionally falling. There's a whole new world for dance now, it's called abstract. He's not the only one though, there's Lincoln Kirstein, and Lucia Chase and Agnes DeMille ... she has just torn up (6)

all those conventions, all that straight up and down stuff (7) ...

N: And she told me about this big new world. Names that didn't mean a thing to me. I didn't really hear very much of what she was saying.

D: It's new and modern and it's American. They understand our vigor and our physicality ... Oh my God, I've just been talk-

ing and talking.

B: No, no, I've enjoyed listening. I didn't know you smoked.

D: I'm old enough. I'm old enough for a lot of things. In New York we stay up all night. Watch the sun come up over the warehouses. There's always something to do. *(Daisy dances in the moonlight)* I have to go back tomorrow.



Scene 4

(In the finale, Benjamin recalls every important person in his life.)

B: Some people are born to sit by a river. Some get struck by lightning. Some

have an ear for music. Some are artists. Some swim. Some know buttons. Some

know Shakespeare. Some are mothers. And some people ... dance.

Vocabulary

- can't stand the sight of someone:** to strongly dislike a person
- all hands:** everybody, here it means every sailors on the boat
- lose track of the night:** to stay up all night long
- current:** the continuous, directed movement of ocean water
- witching hour:** In European folklore, the witching hour is when supernatural creatures are believed to be their most powerful. Today it means midnight.
- tear up:** literally to pull apart or into pieces by force; here it means to destroy or do away with
- straight up and down:** here the phrase also refer to conventions and traditions

(By Wang Yu)